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SATURDAY NIGHT

JACINTO BENAVENTE

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"Such men as Sem Benelli, the marvellous Jacinto Benavente, the English Heraclitus Bernard Shaw, and two or three other Europeans will be largely instrumental in creating a new drama, a drama which until now has been unfamiliar and incomprehensible to the average audience."

—MAXIM GORKY.

"I do not pretend to be conversant with the work of every contemporary dramatist in Europe, but I have no hesitation in declaring that no one of them can be more accomplished than Señor Benavente. . . . Signor Pirandello . . . our own Mr. Shaw . . . not one of them is as completely accomplished."—LENNOX ROBINSON in the *London Observer*.

"As we have now some good translations of Benavente's plays by J. G. Underhill . . . it is not at all unlikely that this prolific author will be the next trump card; and I should not be at all astonished if his vogue proved a more lasting one than that of Tchehov and the rest."

—J. T. GREIN in the *Illustrated London News*.

"I am one of those who believe that our Benavente is without a superior to-day as a dramatist; his work is at least as important as that of Sudermann or Hauptmann, and yet beyond question Benavente does not enjoy equal celebrity with Hauptmann and Sudermann throughout Europe, nor has he been as frequently translated. The reason for this, primarily, is that Spain has not been able to support Benavente's "Bonds of Interest" with the cannon and battleships which Germany has massed behind Hauptmann's "Sunken Bell."

—MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO, "Soliloquies and Conversations."

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PLAYS

By

JACINTO BENAVENTE

Each series translated, with an introduction, by

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

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SATURDAY NIGHT

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From a photograph by Nicholas Muray

EVA LE GALLIENNE AS IMPERIA

SATURDAY NIGHT

BY

JACINTO BENAVENTE

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
WITH A PREFACE
BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

AUTHORIZED EDITION

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1926

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PREFACE

This edition of "Saturday Night" is issued upon the occasion of the first presentation of the play in English as the initial offering of Miss Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre in this city. Miss Le Gallienne's is the third English-speaking theatre to be inaugurated with a play by Benavente, the Theatre Guild of New York and the Everyman Theatre of London having begun with "The Bonds of Interest."

"Saturday Night" was originally performed by the Guerrero-Mendoza Company during its tenancy of the Teatro Español, Madrid, and took its place immediately as one of the most significant creations of the Spanish stage. Revived by the same company at the Teatro de la Princesa in celebration of the admission of Benavente to the Spanish Academy in 1913, where he succeeded to the seat of the distinguished scholar Menéndez y Pelayo, it achieved exceptional success, having remained almost continuously before the Spanish public ever since. It was included in the repertory of the Compañía Benavente which toured America in 1922–1923, Lola Membrives assuming the rôle of Imperia.

Viewed as realistic drama, "Saturday Night" is swift in action, varied in characterization, strikingly and vividly colored with the panoramic opulence which we associate with the Venetian painters, or the luxurious sensuousness of a Rubens. It belongs, however, properly to the theatre of ideas.

"The symbolism of to-day," writes Richard Hovey in the foreword to his translations of Maeterlinck, "has yet a general character that differentiates it from the symbolism of other periods. It by no means of necessity involves a complete and consistent allegory. Its events, its personages, its sentences rather imply than definitely state an esoteric meaning. The story, whether romantic . . . or realistic . . .

lives for itself and produces no impression of being a masquerade of moralities; but behind every incident, almost behind every phrase, one is aware of a lurking universality, the adumbration of greater things." This hounding of the phrase, in fact, was the weakness of the earlier dramatic symbolists. Ibsen, Maeterlinck himself, Strindberg and their followers uniformly depended in great measure upon dialogue to convey the implicit meanings, with the result that these are continually breaking through to the destruction of the integrity of the scenes. With Benavente and Tchehov, each in his degree, we encounter a more mature, sophisticated symbolism, in which the significance of the work is implied in its fundamental conception and structure, and conveyed by the play in its totality without dependence upon the individual word or phrase. Attempting less, they accomplish more. "Saturday Night," "The Bonds of Interest," and "Beyond Death" illustrate interestingly the development of this method.

The present edition is reprinted from the *Third Series* of "Plays by Jacinto Benavente," where it appears together with the comedy "In the Clouds," the psychological dialogue "The Truth," and the children's fairy play "The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books."

J. G. U.

New York,
4 October, 1926.

PRESENTED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ENGLISH BY THE CIVIC REPERTORY THEATRE AT THE FOURTEENTH STREET THEATRE, NEW YORK, ON THE EVENING OF THE 25TH OF OCTOBER, 1926, WITH THE FOLLOWING CAST:

In the Order of Their Appearance

PRINCESS ETELVINA	HILDA PLOWRIGHT
PRINCE MICHAEL ALEXANDER	SAYRE CRAWLEY
THE DUKE OF SUAVIA	EUGENE WELLESLEY
PRINCE FLORENCIO	PAUL LEYSSAC
LADY SEYMOUR	RUTH LAVINGTON
COUNTESS RINALDI	BEATRICE TERRY
LEONARDO	ALAN BIRMINGHAM
HARRY LUCENTI	MARLYN BROWN
EDITH	MARTHA LEAVITT
LORD SEYMOUR	BARLOWE BORLAND
THE SIGNORE	DAVID BELBRIDGE
IMPERIA	EVA LE GALLIENNE
MR. JACOB	EGON BRECHER
AN ARTIST	IAN EMERY
RUHU-SAHIB	HAROLD MOULTON
A WAITER	ARTHUR JACOBSON
ESTHER	MIMI LEHMANN
JULIETTE	GEORGIANNA BROWN
ROSINA	WINTHROP WAYNE
PEPITA	ISABEL JONES
TOBACCO	SYDNEY MACHAT
MME. JENNY	MARY WARD
CORNAC	PRINCE SINGH
LELIA	BEATRICE DE NEERGAARD
NUNU	HARDIE ALBRIGHT
TOMMY	ALAN CAMPBELL
DONINA	ROSE HOBART
ZAIDA	RUTH WILTON
MARCELLA	RUTH LAVINGTON
CELESTE	FRANÇOISE DU MOULIN

Teresina	Georgianna Brown
Nelly	Martha Leavitt
Fanny	Margaret C. Love
Gaetano	Arthur Jacobson
Cecco	Sydney Machat
Commissary of Police	Gordon Pascal
An Unknown	Barlowe Borland
Pietro	Edwin Cooper
Majestá	Leona Roberts
1st Sailor	Don Vere
2nd Sailor	John F. Miller
3rd Sailor	Wesley John
4th Sailor	Walter Plinge
1st Servant	Conway Washburn
2nd Servant	Russell Hopkins

Ladies, Gentlemen, Performers in the Circus, Police, Sailors, Gypsies, and Attendants

The action takes place at a winter resort upon the Riviera, situated near the boundary between Italy and France

Produced under the personal direction of Eva Le Gallienne

Settings by G. E. Calthrop

Stage Manager: Lionel Bevans

SATURDAY NIGHT

NOVEL FOR THE STAGE ARRANGED IN FIVE TABLEAUX

First Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza at the Teatro Español, Madrid, on the Evening of the Seventeenth of March, 1903

CHARACTERS

The Lector	Prince Florencio
Imperia	Lord Seymour
Princess Etelvina	The Duke of Suavia
The Countess Rinaldi	Harry Lucenti
Lady Seymour	The Signore
Edith	Mr. Jacob
Donina	Nunu
Zaida	Tommy
Lelia	Tobacco
Mme. Jenny	Ruhu-Sahib
Majestá	Gaetano
Esther	Cecco
Juliette	Pietro
Rosina	Commissary of Police
Pepita	An Unknown
Celeste	1st Sailor
Teresina	2d Sailor
Nelly	3d Sailor
Fanny	4th Sailor
Marcella	A Waiter
Leonardo	Cornac
Prince Michael Alexander	Servant

Ladies, Gentlemen, Performers in the Circus, Police, Sailors, Gypsies and Attendants

The action takes place at a winter resort upon the Riviera, situated near the boundary between Italy and France

SATURDAY NIGHT

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY THE LECTOR

It is Saturday night. Earth, sea, and sky blend in languorous harmony—light, wave, mountain top, and grove smile with the freshness of a world new-born, ignorant of sorrow and of death. Enchanted shore! Gods and heroes, nymphs and fawns should inhabit you, love and wisdom alone are worthy to contemplate your beauty. The idylls of Theocritus and the eclogues of Virgil breathe the spirit of your poesy, or if, perchance, a poet of our restless age has turned to you to glorify his melancholy, it was the divine Shelley, worshipper of the eternal harmony of Beauty, Truth, and Good, who refused to set bounds and limits to the infinite, adoring God in all his works. The ritual of his worship was the passionate litany of the holy poet of Assisi, the universal lover, who greeted all things with his song of ardent flame: Brother Sun, Brother Sea, Brother Birds, Brother Wolf—all brothers!

Into this enchanted scene, by Nature so lavishly endowed, comes man. It is the fashionable winter season—*à la mode*—man has chosen his earthly paradise well; for paradise indeed it is. He flees from the cold and the chill of the North, and he brings the chill of his life with him; he flees from his life, but his life follows and overtakes him. Every pathway opens beneath his feet into an inferno like Dante's, above whose portals is inscribed the legend:

> "Through me the way is to the city dolent,
> Through me the way is to eternal dole,
> Through me the way among the people lost."

THE FIRST TABLEAU

A hall in a sumptuous villa.

The PRINCESS ETELVINA, LADY SEYMOUR, *the* COUNTESS RINALDI, EDITH, LEONARDO, PRINCE MICHAEL, PRINCE FLORENCIO, LORD SEYMOUR, HARRY LUCENTI, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *are seated about the room.* EDITH *plays upon a lute, while* LADY SEYMOUR *and* LEONARDO *listen to the music.* PRINCESS ETELVINA, PRINCE MICHAEL, LORD SEYMOUR, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *take tea.* PRINCE FLORENCIO, *the* COUNTESS RINALDI, *and* HARRY LUCENTI *examine a number of etchings and engravings, engaging meanwhile in animated conversation. Several* SERVANTS *are in attendance, one of whom hands a telegram to* PRINCE MICHAEL.

ETELVINA. News from Suavia?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Extraordinary news. [*To the* PRINCESS] You should be the first to announce it. Read....

DUKE. Is it serious? [*Imposing silence*] The music, ladies——

ETELVINA. I am delighted. Listen, my son. His Imperial Majesty was presented this morning with a prince and heir.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Long live the Prince!

ALL. Long live the Prince!

DUKE. *Viva* Suavia!

ALL. *Viva* Suavia!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*As he takes the telegram*] At last! A prince after seven princesses! The weight of the empire

has oppressed me long enough; it had become an infirmity. Now I shall recover my health.

LADY SEYMOUR. I must say that you bear the blow cheerfully.

RINALDI. One does not lose a throne every day.

ETELVINA. [*To* PRINCE MICHAEL] We must reply at once. Do not delay our congratulations. Our best wishes for the prosperity of the empire.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Nobody will believe that they are sincere. People always misunderstand me. The Empress suggested an absence from court because she was afraid that I might be in too great haste to wear the crown. Now that the future of my august cousin will be so closely bound up with mine, there is less reason than ever why I should return to Suavia. Responsibility for my own life will suffice me.

ETELVINA. If one may judge by the little care that you take of it.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Since it is my own and belongs entirely to me, perhaps I shall finish by valuing it. I am free! —no longer the heir apparent, the centre of so many hopes, so much ambition, and so much hatred. I am sorry for my cousins, the seven little princesses, who have been dreaming all these years of becoming imperial consorts at my expense, as the Salic law of the empire does not permit them to inherit themselves. It will not matter to them now whether or not I behave.

ETELVINA. You have no right to talk like that. Always this flippant tone!

DUKE. Highness, many of us had placed great faith in you. We watched you from the cradle; we fought beside your father. The heir is a mere babe and the Emperor already old. The state of the empire is perturbed.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Clearly, this is not a solution.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*To* PRINCE MICHAEL] No, my dear uncle, not while you are still young. You may be Regent yet, as you would have been with me; the weight of the empire would have fallen upon your shoulders, and you would have inherited it in the end. My imperial career would have been short.

ETELVINA. Who knows? Life then would have had an object for you—it would have acquired meaning. However, if you are satisfied——

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Absolutely. And you? Do you recall Daudet's "*Rois en exile*": "Do you love me less now that I am not to be king?"

ETELVINA. Ungrateful, foolish boy! If you are happy, it is all that I desire.

LADY SEYMOUR. A curious coincidence! Edith was playing the national air of your lost empire.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Yes, upon the lute. How depressing! To do it justice, the theme requires drums and trumpets against a background of flashing swords and shining armor I am told that all the fighting spirit of our country has been put into it, although it was composed by a monk who was a foreigner, for the funeral of some poet.

DUKE. A preposterous fabrication.

LADY SEYMOUR. A monk, did you say, and a poet? The combination is amusing.

LEONARDO. Tennyson might have composed an occasional poem.

LADY SEYMOUR. Tennyson was an exceptional poet. He was a gentleman, received in the best society.

HARRY LUCENTI. [*To* LEONARDO] Lady Seymour is jealous of me. She will not pardon the Prince my invitation.

LEONARDO. You are the scandal of England.

HARRY LUCENTI. Run through the *secrétaires* of the great ladies and in every one of them you will find a volume of my poems, laid away with their love-letters. On the table in the drawing-room, the Bible and Kipling.

LEONARDO. And a respectable husband at the head of the table.

HARRY LUCENTI. After dinner, under it.

LEONARDO. I told you that joke yesterday and you found it in extremely bad taste.

HARRY LUCENTI. On the lips of a foreigner, it still continues to be so. It is not easy to forget that one is English, although one has been banished from England like Byron.

LEONARDO. But you have not yet succeeded in banishing England?

RINALDI. Byron, did you say? Byron never seemed immoral to me. I learned English when I was a schoolgirl, reading Byron.

LEONARDO. Did you learn nothing but English reading Byron?

RINALDI. We are not like Lady Seymour in Italy. It is impossible to shock us with banished poets.

LEONARDO. The Countess is shock-proof. She has been cured of timidity.

RINALDI. Rather I am convalescing. That is the reason I come here every winter.

LEONARDO. Always alone.

RINALDI. What is there to attract my husband?

LEONARDO. Nothing; he has been cured already.

ETELVINA. There will be great rejoicing in Suavia.

DUKE. The court and the official element, not to speak of the people, idolized Prince Florencio. They could not forget that he was the son of the soldier, of the invincible liberator, your husband, venerated throughout Suavia.

ETELVINA. Justly so. Yet during these last years, they have hesitated at nothing to discredit my son.

DUKE. What constitution at his age could support this continual liquidation?

PRINCE MICHAEL. If Florencio had been otherwise—pardon, I do not wish to distress you—he is your son, and I know how you love him. But Florencio's conduct——

ETELVINA. What can you tell me that I do not already know? I have shed too many tears. But now his health distresses me. I have brought him here to recuperate.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Here? You arrived two days ago, and already the Prefect has advised me that he is frequenting objectionable resorts.

ETELVINA. Great heaven!

PRINCE MICHAEL. The Prefect is a man of the world; everybody calls him the Signore. He is paid handsomely to keep the peace, and throw an air of respectability over this petty principality, which is a cosmopolis and Mecca of all the idlers of the earth.

ETELVINA. Do you tell me that Florencio....?

PRINCE MICHAEL. There is no cause for alarm. The Signore has detailed special agents to watch him; they will protect him should occasion arise. Nevertheless, it is deplorable.

ETELVINA. Yes, it is. You sympathize with me. Nothing remained but that he should form an intimacy with this Lucenti, this poet, half-English, half-Italian, a man utterly without moral sense. Lord and Lady Seymour were scandalized to meet him here.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Is it possible? But I thought....pardon a moment. I noticed, my lady, that you appeared to be somewhat shocked by the presence of Harry Lucenti.

LADY SEYMOUR. Really, nobody receives that man.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I beg your pardon. I thought I saw you talking with him at the Casino last evening.

LADY SEYMOUR. Oh, many times! But not before my husband.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But I have often seen your husband talking with him.

LADY SEYMOUR. Frequently. But never before me.

PRINCE MICHAEL. English propriety is more complicated than I had imagined.

LADY SEYMOUR. It is respectability.

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] I am in no humor for trifling this evening. Frankly, I am bored. You have no idea how bored I am.

LEONARDO. But you are dying to tell me.

RINALDI. Artists are such dangerous confidants. Afterward, they reveal all one's secrets to the public.

LEONARDO. I am a sculptor. What secrets have you that my art could reveal to the public? By the way, you would make an admirable Juno.

RINALDI. You told me Minerva yesterday.

LEONARDO. It may be Venus to-morrow; everything in its season.

RINALDI. You might have worse models.

LEONARDO. I defer to your authority.

RINALDI. I warn you that I am wearing no stays; this is support *à la grècque.*

LEONARDO. Now you are encroaching upon my domain. Only spiritual confidences, if you please.

RINALDI Why do you suppose that I am here this evening?

LEONARDO. How should I know? Probably because you were invited to dinner by Prince Michael, like the rest of us, to celebrate the arrival of his sister, the Princess Alex-

andra Etelvina, and her august son, Prince Florencio, the late apparent heir.

RINALDI. Invited? On the contrary, I am here precisely because I was not invited.

LEONARDO. Impossible!

RINALDI. Apparently I am considered a *déclassée;* it is my own fault in a way. In Paris I was presented to the Prince officially by the Italian Ambassador, but here, of course, there is no etiquette. One comes for a change, to amuse oneself. One associates with everybody, just as if one were in the country. The Casino, the races, the shooting-club are all neutral ground. Well, one day, at one of them, I chanced upon the Prince with—with his....

LEONARDO. With Imperia.

RINALDI. Should I have refused to bow to him? How absurd! I am not like Lady Seymour, afraid to be seen in public with a fellow countryman, an artist like Harry Lucenti.

LEONARDO. It would have been absurd.

RINALDI. Art and beauty are sacred in Italy. One of the popes said apropos of Benvenuto Cellini, that such artists were above all laws. I did not hesitate to meet the Prince's *innamorata*, nor absent myself from the companies at her villa, nor hurry to leave the Prince at the moment she arrived, when only a few remained—the intimates, the inner circle. They are the most fascinating. However, the Prince has taken my condescension for moral abdication. That is the reason I am here without an invitation. Naturally, he did not seem surprised, but when the Princess saw me, she was like an icicle.

LEONARDO. She is extremely old-fashioned. She receives only dragons of virtue.

RINALDI. And discretion, like the daughter of the Duke of

Suavia. Romantic creature, is she not?—a young lady in waiting, whom the Princess retains in the family so that Prince Florencio may entertain himself at home, and not create such scandals in Suavia.

LEONARDO. Poor Prince! He is very susceptible; a lover of art, indefatigable in the pursuit of beauty.

RINALDI. Entirely too much so. Was he not a lover of Imperia before his uncle?

LEONARDO. I may have heard talk.

RINALDI. And after you?

LEONARDO. She was only my model; I was never her lover. She took her name, Imperia, from one of my statues. It was at my studio in Rome that she met Prince Florencio.

RINALDI. Who left you without a model? You see I am taking your word. Then you fell sick.

LEONARDO. With malaria.

RINALDI. And changed your life completely. Your art suffered a collapse. Is it true that you broke into pieces a great block of marble which you had prepared for a gigantic statue, *The Triumph of Life?* It was to have been a work of genius, and surely not the last. Italy then might have boasted two Leonardos, equally great.

LEONARDO. Leonardo! You have no idea how the name has obsessed me ever since I was a child. It has been to me like some preternatural portent. My father admired the divine *da Vinci*, so he gave me the name—my father was a lover of beautiful things, an idolater of great artists. It was a mighty name which compelled me from my boyhood's days to dream great dreams. But you see how it was: a great ideal can be realized only when it has been reduced to our scale, shattered into parts. From that block of Carrara marble from which I intended to carve my masterpiece, I cut a thousand figurines, such as you have seen in the

windows and at the exhibitions, or afterward in the parlors and boudoirs of the rich—graceful, if you will, they were charming; the public was pleased, and they sold very well. Instead of a dazzling flash of inspiration in a single work, a spark of artful grace in a thousand toys; instead of a monument to immortalize an heroic deed and embody beauty to posterity, a paper-weight, perhaps, or a *bibelot* to support an electric light. And people thought that I had realized my ideal! They judged my soul by my work. They see the grains of sand, but they do not know that in their making a mountain crumbled into dust!

RINALDI. But suppose the ideal is one of love, as mine is?

LEONARDO. You know the secret. Break the block of your illusions and content yourself with figurines. Love all as you would have loved one.

RINALDI. Loving much is not the same as loving many. Consider your experience. You broke the marble, but have you been able to forget your model, your Imperia? Why are you here if it is not for her?

LEONARDO. We are all here for something.

RINALDI. Which we do not tell. We fly from ourselves, from the false lives which we lead, which our position in the world imposes. That is why we huddle together in this promiscuous place where everybody sees and knows everything, but where everybody agrees to see and know nothing. To-night we are cowed into respectability by the presence of the Princess; we are in another world, where we are bored beyond speaking. We would give an eternity to be free as our thoughts are at this moment.

LEONARDO. We are shadows of ourselves as we pass through the world. We see those who walk beside us, yet we know nothing of what they are.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*To* HARRY LUCENTI] I must go with

mother. It will never do to have her worry. I can give out that I have gone to bed, and join you later. Will those people be there?

HARRY LUCENTI. We might stop for them at the theatre. Do you know Mr. Jacob's new theatre? A gorgeous music-hall, in the worst possible taste, but diverting. Of course it has less character than the old puppet-show by the port, with its sailors and stevedores, open-mouthed at the sight of the fine ladies adventuring slumming. But Cecco's tavern is still there. He gives foreigners their money's worth, too —the whole performance, popular dances, a duel with knives, winding up with a raid by the police, all engineered and directed by Cecco. You would swear it was the truth.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. We might take supper there. It will be more amusing than these eternal midnight cafés.

HARRY LUCENTI. I think so, too. We can have the performance suppressed. He knows we are in the secret.

[*They continue the conversation.*

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] I felt sure that you were sympathetic, but this intimacy with the Prince was disconcerting. My husband may be appointed Ambassador to Suavia. It would never do to have these people suspect anything. Otherwise, I should have consulted the Prefect.

LEONARDO. The Signore? How could you be so foolish? This place would be a paradise but for him. Every winter he imports the picked rogues of Christendom; then they pay him to keep an eye on them; so he contrives to earn his salary. However, leave it to me; there is no occasion to worry. You say he works in a music-hall?—an acrobat, a brute of a fellow?

RINALDI. A brute, but wonderful! You understand; you, too, are an artist.

LEONARDO. Is he threatening you with an open scandal?

RINALDI. I am in for five thousand francs.

LEONARDO. It seems incredible. You have been foolish in more senses than one.

RINALDI. Not a word of it to anybody.

LEONARDO. No, everybody knows it already. Don't imagine that everybody hears from me what I hear from everybody.

RINALDI. But do they know?

LEONARDO. Oh! I should not bother. The same thing happened to Lady Seymour with one of her grooms. Now she envelops herself in the British flag, without condescending to notice you during the entire evening. We become impossible socially, not because of what people know about us, but because of what they imagine we may know about them.

RINALDI. Precisely. We ought always to say what we know about everybody, not out of malice, but in the interest of truth and good feeling. All of us are made of the same clay. Virtue consists merely of those vices which one does not possess. If it had been virtuous not to eat apples, and I had been Eve, man would never have fallen. I cannot abide the sight of apples; although I do not complain of those that eat them. No doubt they have good reasons.

LEONARDO. They seem good to them.

ETELVINA. [*Rising*] It is growing late; it is time to retire. [*To* PRINCE MICHAEL] Will you lunch with us to-morrow?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Without fail. And we shall write to the Emperor.

DUKE. [*To a* SERVANT] Her Highness's carriage. Gentlemen, her Highness retires.

ETELVINA. Good evening to all. It has been pleasant to meet old friends.—My lady, I may count you among them.

LADY SEYMOUR. Your Highness compliments me to say so.

ETELVINA. Countess.... [*To* LEONARDO] My dear artist,

your works have become indispensable in my house. I trust that you apply yourself now? Your new style is entrancing. Like the old masters, you combine art with utility. Even the necessities you make charming. Good afternoon.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*To* HARRY] Don't be long.

HARRY LUCENTI. I shall be there before you. Good night.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Good-by, uncle.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Be careful of your health! Have some regard for your mother.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Yes, I remain at home this evening.

ETELVINA. So Florencio has promised me.

PRINCESS ETELVINA, PRINCE FLORENCIO, EDITH, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *retire, accompanied by* PRINCE MICHAEL.

RINALDI. The Princess is remarkably well preserved.

LEONARDO. She almost looks young.

LADY SEYMOUR. She leads the life of an anchorite—a good thing for the poor.

RINALDI. Very popular, too, I am told, in Suavia.

LEONARDO. The virtues of the Princess prove more embarrassing at court than the vices of her son. That is the reason they advise them to travel.

LORD SEYMOUR. I never meddle in foreign affairs.

LEONARDO. An artist, my lord, must communicate his impressions. It is a matter of habit.

LORD SEYMOUR. Damn bad habit! [*To* LADY SEYMOUR] I shall accompany you, my dear. Where do you pass the evening?

LADY SEYMOUR. At the Villa Miranda. There is to be chamber-music. You know what that is....

PRINCE MICHAEL *re-enters.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. The Princess was delighted to meet you again.

LADY SEYMOUR. Apparently everybody delights the Princess. Good evening, your Highness. Did you receive the invitation to my concert?

PRINCE MICHAEL. A concert such as could be arranged only by an artist of your taste.

LORD *and* LADY SEYMOUR *go out, escorted by the* PRINCE.

RINALDI. You noticed that she did not invite me? However, it makes no matter. I don't need her invitation.

LEONARDO. You will go without it, of course.

RINALDI. Depend upon me.

HARRY LUCENTI. Never permit yourself such a liberty with an Englishwoman; the risk is too great.

RINALDI. I shall present myself upon the arm of one of her grooms.

HARRY LUCENTI. I should advise you not to meddle in foreign affairs.

RINALDI. Ah! Do you defend your hypocritical society after having become the victim of it?

HARRY LUCENTI. I do not complain; I do as I like, and others do the same. I scandalize England, but the world is before me.

RINALDI. You scandalize the world.

HARRY LUCENTI. The world is too dull to be so easily scandalized. Fancy, if one were obliged to please everybody! —Do you please everybody?

LEONARDO. The Countess does, and no complaints.

RINALDI. I am excessively careful about what people think of me.

LEONARDO. As everybody knows.

RINALDI. Without joking.

LEONARDO. Seriously. Of course everybody knows. But I say, if you were not careful!

HARRY LUCENTI. Prince Florencio will be waiting.

RINALDI. Evidently he is a great friend of yours. If he had been Emperor, he would have kept you always at his side like....

HARRY LUCENTI. You intended to say like a fool?

RINALDI. A rather sad fool.

HARRY LUCENTI. English fools are always sad. They might pass for diplomatists in other countries.

LEONARDO. All fools are sad. A smile is the most efficient grave-digger. We cry over what lives, what suffers, what we still carry in our hearts; but when we laugh at a thing—love, faith, memory, hope—it is dead. Shakespeare's fools are the most tragic figures in his tragedies. Hamlet shrivels up in the presence of the grave-diggers, singing and jesting among the graves. Their spades grit in the earth, and out comes the skull of Yorick, the King's jester, to leer and scoff with that horrible grin of his bony jaws. Everything dies, but we still smile. What is life, eternally renewing itself, but the triumphant smile of love as it conquers death?

RINALDI. But death is the end of all things, and then....

HARRY LUCENTI. Hell then. Fortunately, you Italians have a most alluring *Inferno*. I see you, Countess, in the same circle as Francesca, always in the best society.

RINALDI. You must not joke about such things. I am a believer; I hope to be saved.

LEONARDO. Why not? The lives of all the saints have two parts—even the best of them. You are still in the first.

RINALDI. Let us talk of something else. Often, I leap out of bed, shrieking, in the middle of the night, mad with terror, because the idea of death creeps into my mind as I am falling asleep. Sometimes when it is day, one of those days all holiday and sunshine, in the midst of the crowds and the festival, suddenly I stop and think that within a few years all those people will no longer be there, that they will all be dead, and

it seems to me that I must cry out to them and warn them, as if some terrible calamity were impending! Then, all at once a dark veil of silence descends before my eyes—I am not well; I have consulted physicians.

LEONARDO. What do they say?

RINALDI. They advise me to distract myself, to sleep always with a light, with some one near.

LEONARDO. A simple prescription for you to follow.

PRINCE MICHAEL *and the* SIGNORE *enter.*

SIGNORE. Ah, gentlemen! What! The Countess? It is a long time since I have had the pleasure—although I have not forgotten her.

RINALDI. The Signore Prefect is very kind. Whenever I have had the pleasure before, it has always been because of some experience that was disagreeable. The last time I lost my jewels.

SIGNORE. Well, you had no reason to complain. Do you remember that night you heard rumblings in your villa? And the time that *escroc* tried to make you dance to the tune of those letters?

RINALDI. They were forgeries.

SIGNORE. I suppose those anonymous articles were forgeries which revealed such intimate knowledge of the details of your life? But I was on hand to protect you.

RINALDI. You protected me, Signore. [*To* LEONARDO] I wish I could remember the man's name.

LEONARDO. As he never tells the truth, nobody knows his real one. Call him the Signore, and you will make no mistake.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I had no idea that the Countess was one of your clients.

SIGNORE. One of the best of them. That theft of her jewels—a trick to make people think they were genuine.

They were imitation. She valued them at three million francs. The anonymous articles she wrote herself, so that she could truthfully say they were slander.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Very clever of her.

SIGNORE. An extreme measure.

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] The Signore bows with a mysterious air, as if he were doing one the favor to keep a secret.

LEONARDO. I hardly think he would go so far. I hear he is about to publish his memoirs.

RINALDI. Gracious! I shall have to buy up the edition. Will you see me home?

LEONARDO. As far as you like.

RINALDI. You do not wish to wait for Imperia?

LEONARDO. Not in the least. I shall retire with you.

RINALDI. Highness, I was delighted to receive your invitation.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Are you leaving so soon? Imperia may be here at any moment. Now we are only the intimates, the inner circle.

RINALDI. I have decided that it is best not to be too intimate. I had supposed that there was only a garden between your villa and that of Imperia—a garden with a gate; but I realize now that you have erected an impenetrable wall.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Don't be vindictive! It isn't my fault. Princess Etelvina admits but few to her acquaintance.

RINALDI. And she is very wise to do so. Hereafter, I shall imitate her example. Good evening, Highness.

HARRY LUCENTI. Highness, good evening.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Sinister poet! Dark courier of infernos like Virgil! Be mindful of Prince Florencio; his health is precarious.

HARRY LUCENTI. I shall endeavor to be as mindful of

him as your Highness. You deprived him of his mistress —entirely for his good. I shall do the same whenever I have the opportunity.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Good evening.

The COUNTESS RINALDI, LEONARDO, *and* HARRY LUCENTI *go out.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. To what am I indebted for this honor, Signore?

SIGNORE. I have a difficult duty to perform—believe me, solely in your Highness's interest. Positively, this intrusion is most disagreeable.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Not to me; I am glad to see you.

SIGNORE. No, but it is to me; I am the one who finds it disagreeable. You will appreciate that the meeting here of two Princes is regarded with suspicion in Suavia. You are both immediate heirs, in direct succession to the throne.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I beg your pardon—were, were until to-day. Haven't you seen the telegram?

SIGNORE. Another heir? I am delighted! That is, I am disappointed—upon your account, although I am relieved.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Do not trouble yourself upon my account. You are at liberty to be relieved or disappointed quite as may suit your convenience.

SIGNORE. Then I am relieved, because a conspiracy had been anticipated and I had been retained to keep you under surveillance. Of course, knowing as I do the sort of life that you lead here——

PRINCE MICHAEL. To avoid being Emperor I would have conspired all my life! Do you suppose that I would exchange my liberty for an empire?

SIGNORE. No, no! I beg of you, do not insist. I should not have spoken unless I had been sure. The government of Suavia subsists upon conspiracies. To-day it is an assas-

sination, to-morrow an insurrection. Last year we had a fellow suspected of anarchism, a Belgian who lived in the most extraordinary manner—in a wooden stockade which he built for himself. And there he was visited by the most singular people, the most outlandish in dress! We felt sure we had discovered a hotbed of sedition, and took measures to surprise it, with the result that it turned out to be a gallery for taking views for the cinematograph. Yes, sir! And such views! I had him indicted for an assault upon morality; but we have preserved the films. If some day your Highness would like to arrange a little entertainment for your friends, I should be delighted to lend them to you.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Thank you, but I should not care to be surprised in a conspiracy of that nature.

SIGNORE. In my entire career I have never been guilty of a single indiscretion.

PRINCE MICHAEL. You must have seen a great deal.

SIGNORE. I hold the key to a whole cabinet of mysteries. For the most part, people know as much about life as they do about the theatre—they see the play, that is all; the real show goes on behind the scenes.

PRINCE MICHAEL. By the way, that reminds me; Prince Florencio——

SIGNORE. Oh! I have him always under my eye! At times it is difficult; that Englishman knows some remarkable places. And what people! He would have made a good Prefect.

PRINCE MICHAEL. No, you are quite inimitable.

SIGNORE. Inimitable? Am I not? I should like to see what this Babel would be without me, although upon the surface everything appears so quiet and so calm. The difficulty in my profession is not to inform myself about my business; it is to prevent myself from becoming informed

about what is not my business. However, your Highness need have no concern. Pardon this intrusion....

PRINCE MICHAEL. You are pardoned, you may be sure.

The SIGNORE *goes out.*

During the conclusion of the scene, IMPERIA *has been slowly descending the staircase of the hall.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia! How are you? I have not seen you all day. I have not had one spare moment.

IMPERIA. I also have had guests.

PRINCE MICHAEL. So I see.

IMPERIA. No, you must not judge by this. I do not dress for others; I dress for myself. I like to see myself in beautiful clothes. Your friends did not care to wait for me?

PRINCE MICHAEL. They all had something for the evening. The Countess is terribly put out; I did not find it convenient to invite her.

IMPERIA. And so she invited herself? She was right. In a company which included Lady Seymour and Harry Lucenti, the Countess could scarcely have been out of place. Such hypocrisy is odious.

PRINCE MICHAEL. In the first place, with regard to Lady Seymour, people say, they don't know. As far as the poet is concerned, he is the Prince's friend, and an artist.

IMPERIA. In her line, the Countess is also an artist.

PRINCE MICHAEL. She is a fool. Now I hear that she is in love with an acrobat. Not only does she frequent the circus every evening, but she actually goes behind the scenes and mingles with the performers.

IMPERIA. Yes, I have seen her there myself.

PRINCE MICHAEL. You? You at the circus!

IMPERIA. Yes, the last four nights, without missing one.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But you said nothing about it.

IMPERIA. You didn't ask.

PRINCE MICHAEL. What infatuation is this?

IMPERIA. It isn't infatuation. I go to see my daughter.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Your daughter! What daughter? I didn't know you had a daughter.

IMPERIA. You never asked. What do you know of my life? What other people have told you, who know no more about it than you do, what for some reason I may have seen fit to tell you myself—only I always tell you the truth.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But this daughter?

IMPERIA. She is the child of the only man I ever loved.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Thanks.

IMPERIA. And I still love him; I always shall.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Where is he?

IMPERIA. In prison, reprieved from a death-sentence, serving for life.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Romantic episode!

IMPERIA. He stabbed a foreigner in Rome, attempting to take his money. He killed him. He had been three days without food. We models could earn nothing then; the malaria had driven out the artists.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Were you living with him at the time?

IMPERIA. No, he was living with his mother. I lived at home with my parents and my brothers and sisters, with my child. My father owned a house by the riverside, half tavern, half concert-hall. We children did a little of everything. During the day we went out as models; at night we danced tarantellas in the theatre and sang Neapolitan songs. Then Leonardo gave my father five hundred *lire* to let me come to live with him.

PRINCE MICHAEL. But Imperia! This is horrible!

IMPERIA. It is the truth. What was my father to do? We had to live somehow.

PRINCE MICHAEL. How old is this daughter?

IMPERIA. Fourteen. I was fifteen when she was born.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Where has she been all these years?

IMPERIA. At home with my parents.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Has it never occurred to you to bring her here?

IMPERIA. Why should I? I always sent her money, so she wanted for nothing. Besides, she was better off there. I should have liked to see her, to have returned home—oh, so often! But to bring her here....

PRINCE MICHAEL. What do you intend to do now?

IMPERIA. They have written me that she has fallen in love.

PRINCE MICHAEL. At fourteen? Admirable precocity!

IMPERIA. No, not in Italy. We are not like you are. It is a young fellow who danced in the theatre with her. She ran off with him.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Excellent!

IMPERIA. And now they are appearing together at Mr. Jacob's. Donina—her name is Donina, that was my name at home—is the star of the troupe. She is not beautiful, but she is attractive, oh, so attractive!—very much as I was, as I might have been. And the boy is a fine strapping fellow, *bello, bello!* He looks like one of the Madonna's angels, but they say he is a rogue. All the girls are mad over him, and Donina is jealous, oh, so jealous! As jealous as I was, as I should have been!

PRINCE MICHAEL. But, Imperia! It makes my blood run cold to hear you. Do you consent to this? Do you abet it?

IMPERIA. Abet what? That my daughter should love a man, that she should be happy loving and suffering for him? That is life. I asked her: Would you like to come and live

with me in a beautiful villa, *bella, bella!*—and to have clothes like these? But she wouldn't; she didn't want to. It was only natural. She has no affection for me.

PRINCE MICHAEL. No affection for her mother? This *is* horrible.

IMPERIA. It is the truth. Why should she love me? I left her when she was two years old. She knew that I was alive somewhere, a great way off, that I sent her presents and kisses, sometimes—in my letters. My brothers told her terrible things about me; so did my parents. No wonder! Whatever I sent seemed little enough to them.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Is it possible to live like this?

IMPERIA. Why not? They are in love. If anything happens to one of us, we stand together for vengeance, without one thought of forgiveness, even after years. But with you, it is different. Have you any affection? It is impossible to insult you. If one could, you would never take to blows. Nobody gives you five hundred *lire* when he falls in love with or wants to marry your child. Nothing appears to you as it really is—nothing that you think, nothing that you do. But with us it is all truth, and that is the reason it seems so evil.

PRINCE MICHAEL. It may be so. We face the truth too seldom in our lives.

IMPERIA. Now I am going to leave you. I am going to see my daughter.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I should like to see her, too. I will meet you there.

IMPERIA. But you must not let yourself be known.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Why not?

IMPERIA. She has been told that I am living with a Prince, and she imagines that he is like a prince in a fairy-tale—*bello, bello!*

PRINCE MICHAEL. And she would be disappointed? Isn't it so? How amiable!

IMPERIA. It is the truth. She is—as I was. All she understands is love—like his. Youth and happiness and joy!

Curtain

THE SECOND TABLEAU

A café in a music-hall, representing a grotto, fantastically decorated. Tables and chairs on both sides. Men and women are seated at the tables, smoking and taking refreshments. Waiters pass in and out continually. At the back, an orchestra of gypsies.

MR. JACOB *stands talking with an* ARTIST. RUHU-SAHIB, *at a table, drinks enormously.*

JACOB. [*To the* ARTIST] But this? What do you think of this? Allow me. Here is the best point of view.

ARTIST. Marvellous! Magical!

JACOB. You are surprised to see this, eh? Now what do you say? Pardon, allow me. Here is another point of view.

ARTIST. Marvellous! Magical!

JACOB. My own idea! It didn't occur to me in a moment. Ideas like this don't occur every day. The entire café converted into a grotto—rest for the body, recreation for the soul after the brilliancy of the spectacle. In all Europe, in all America, there is nothing to equal it. It is the most magnificent music-hall in the world—four million francs invested in it. You may say so in your paper.

ARTIST. In my paper? Oh, Mr. Jacob, I am not a reporter!

JACOB. What? You are not the correspondent of the *Dramatic Courier* of Milan, of the Genoa *Manager's Monitor*?

ARTIST. I did not say——

JACOB. But the card you sent in to the office?

ARTIST. Was not mine—a mistake. I am an artist, a performer. I come to make you a great, an extraordinary proposition.

JACOB. An extraordinary proposition?

ARTIST. Yes. To engage me. I have references.

JACOB. And is this what you have kept me talking two hours for, showing you my theatre? Wasting my time! *Andate al diavolo! Morte de un cane! Mais fichez moi la paix toute de suite!* Wasting my time! Valuable time!

ARTIST. Mr. Jacob! Mr. Jacob!

MR. JACOB *rushes out, followed by the* ARTIST.

RUHU-SAHIB. [*Calling a* WAITER] Is the first part over yet?

WAITER. Just over. Don't you see the people coming out?

RUHU-SAHIB. Take this bottle away; bring another bottle. This time I pay myself. No go on the bill of *Madame.*

WAITER. *Madame* says she will pay for no more bottles, after that row you had yesterday.

RUHU-SAHIB. I pay myself. Bring another bottle. Don't talk so much. I break your head.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

ESTHER. Will you look at the elephant-driver?

JULIETTE. He's a case.

ESTHER. To add to your collection?

JULIETTE. Not for mine; he's too much for me.

TOBACCO *and* JENNY *enter.*

ESTHER. Ah! Tobacco, the nigger clown. I have to laugh. He looks like a monkey.

JULIETTE. Is that his wife?

ESTHER. Yes, she's English. The funny thing is, though, they are married. They love each other, oh, so much! They have seven children.

JULIETTE. Blondes?

ESTHER. Not so far; all like their father. My! But it's dull to-night.

JULIETTE. There's nobody here but women.

JENNY. [*To* TOBACCO] Did you stop at the bank?

TOBACCO. I certainly did. [*Making notes in a pocketbook*] Let me see how we come out. With five thousand francs in Turks, if we can sell like last week, it's an investment; we clear a hundred francs.

JENNY. That's handsome.

TOBACCO. I might get a new dress for the act.

JENNY. What for? To throw your money away, eh, playing the clown? Don't you think you look funny unless you wear silk?

TOBACCO. The Russian has a new suit every night.

JENNY. Yes, and people aren't laughing at him any more on account of his clothes. An artist like you is not in the same class with that Russian. Mr. Jacob is an idiot if he pays that man six thousand francs.

TOBACCO. Mr. Jacob won't pay me ten thousand. Now he wants to throw me out, but the public will only laugh at Tobacco. There is only one Tobacco. So he puts the Russian in the second half as the feature, and I am down in the first for the third number. And the audience comes early to see me and they go home early so as not to see the Russian. The public are the ones who pay the artists, the managers don't pay them. An artist is not able to name his own figure.

JENNY. Mr. Jacob is a rogue. He behaves as if this were a barroom.

CORNAC *enters.*

CORNAC. Mr. Ruhu! Mr. Ruhu! Hurry up! Come quick! Nero very excited. Break the bar of his cage. No let us put on the howdah.

RUHU-SAHIB. What's the matter? Hurry up? Too damn hot! Waiter! Give him some beer. And I want some beer.

CORNAC. *Madame* says elephants must not drink beer.

RUHU-SAHIB. *Madame* says too much so as not to pay for the beer. I pay for the beer. A bottle for me, a barrel for the elephants!

MR. JACOB *enters.*

JACOB. Ruhu! Ruhu! One of the elephants has broken loose. He has smashed the bars of his cage. Two hundred francs! And the worst of it is, he won't perform.

RUHU-SAHIB. He will, he will perform. Poor beast! He do no harm. He is a gentle animal.

JACOB. If you don't hurry and do something to the brute——

RUHU-SAHIB. Nero harm no one. You don't know him. I know him. Wait! He is the gentlest of the seven.

JACOB. And don't drink so much. The people see how you are, and so do the elephants.

RUHU-SAHIB. What do they see? I know what they see; and I know what the elephants see. I drink, oh, I drink! But I know what I drink.

JACOB. *Ma andate al diavolo!* Damn rascal!

ROSINA *and* PEPITA *detain* MR. JACOB.

ROSINA. You are not angry, Mr. Jacob?

JACOB. That Hindu savage costs me twelve thousand francs besides the feed of his animals! And don't his animals feed! And the public will have none of them; seen once, seen for always. A fine piece of business! Bah! Business? People see the audience, then they see me; they say: "Ah! Mr. Jacob! Fortunate man! Theatre full, receipts enormous, *le maximum tous les soirs.*" But they don't see behind the scenes; they don't know what artists are; they don't understand management, business——

ROSINA. Oh, now, please don't be angry, Mr. Jacob! Not when I want to ask you a favor.

JACOB. Favor? Always favors!

ROSINA. It's for my friend.

PEPITA. *Monsieur....*

ROSINA. I thought maybe you might let her have a pass for the season.

JACOB. *Mon Dieu!* A girl like her? Is it possible she can't get anybody to pay her way in?

ROSINA. If it wasn't for us, there wouldn't be anybody here, Mr. Jacob.

JACOB. On the contrary, you drive decent people away, people who——

ROSINA. When have we had so many princes as this year? I know you will, eh, Mr. Jacob?

JACOB. Well, since she's a friend of yours. Go on into the office; but tell her to take more pains with her *toilette.*

ROSINA. She's just got in; her trunk hasn't come yet. I'll look out for her.

JACOB. Where does your friend come from?

ROSINA. From Marseilles.

JACOB. Ah! From Marseilles? Tell her not to say she's from Marseilles. It's not a recommendation.

ROSINA. She don't look very Parisian either. She might be a Spaniard....

JACOB. That Spanish business has been done to death; however, anything is better than Marseilles. The thing is to have personality, to be some one; not to be just like every one else. There are so many! However, there is something in her face. She may get on, though it is difficult. But there is no reason to be discouraged. Good luck, girls! Good luck! I can't wait; I'm so busy....

ROSINA. Thanks, Mr. Jacob.

PEPITA. Thanks.

PRINCE FLORENCIO *and* HARRY LUCENTI *have entered during the conversation, seating themselves at one of the tables.*

ROSINA. I told you it would be easy. Look! A Prince! The Prince of Suavia.

PEPITA. Do you get many princes here?

ROSINA. Very few—real ones. [*They go out, talking.*

JACOB. [*To the* PRINCE] Ah! Your Highness! This is a great honor to me and to my theatre. At your Highness's orders. *Signore!* Ah! I forgot. Next week new and extraordinary attractions. One number alone twenty thousand francs! Business is becoming more difficult, prices continually going up. Your Highness....

[*Backs off, bowing.*

HARRY LUCENTI. Delightful old scamp, Mr. Jacob.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. He must lead a gay life with his artists.

MR. JACOB *goes up to* MME. JENNY, *who is sitting at a table, knitting busily.*

JACOB. But Mme. Jenny, must we quarrel always?

JENNY. Why, Mr. Jacob?

JACOB. Is this a place for you to do your knitting?

JENNY. I have to work for the children. What harm is there in it?

JACOB. You might cook your meals here if you like.

JENNY. Yes, it's better to do—what the others do.

JACOB. It's all my fault for allowing the artists to mix with the public.

TOBACCO. Artists? Does he mean me?

JENNY. It's easy to see that you're not accustomed to dealing with artists.

JACOB. I am not accustomed to dealing with artists?

TOBACCO. No. This isn't a theatre, this isn't a circus, it's a....

JENNY. [*Pointing to the cocottes*] Those are the artists you want here.

JACOB. My business is to please the public.

TOBACCO. Well, don't I please the public? Here! Here!

[*Squaring off to strike him. Several interfere.*

SOME. Mr. Jacob!

OTHERS. Tobacco! *Messieurs!*

CORNAC *enters running.*

CORNAC. Mr. Ruhu! Mr. Ruhu! Nero run away! He break everything!

RUHU-SAHIB. Can't they let him alone? Give him a chance. Go on! What more do they want?

[*Saunters out, after drinking, very deliberately.*

The bell rings.

JACOB. And I waste my time, valuable time! The second part—*Sottes!* Stupid people!

MR. JACOB *runs out.*

TOBACCO. I'm through; that settles it. I shan't stay in this place another day. I'm through, I tell you.

MME. LELIA *enters. She carries a large hand-bag.*

LELIA. Why, what is the matter, Mr. Tobacco? Have you been fighting with Mr. Jacob? He is an idiot to fight with you. How are you, Mme. Jenny? How are the little ones?

JENNY. Entirely too healthy for their mother. What they don't eat they break. We cannot keep a thing in the house.

LELIA. I should think you would be glad they are well and strong; some day they will grow up and earn money.

TOBACCO. Yes, they're pretty fine tumblers as it is—better than the Sheffers already.

JENNY. How is your little one, Mme. Lelia?

LELIA. She is not well; only so-so. I had to put her on

the bottle. You see, with my work on the wire, it was impossible——

JENNY. I brought up all seven of mine on the bottle. An artist can do nothing else nowadays, with all the demands on her time. The first thing you know, they take everything.

LELIA. What did Mr. Jacob say?

JENNY. He didn't like my knitting here—a little jacket for my Alex.

LELIA. Last night he told me this hat wasn't presentable—a hat that cost me fifteen francs in Paris the year of the Exposition. This is no place for artists, for decent people.

TOBACCO. This isn't a circus. After a man has worked at Rentz's in Vienna, at Wulf's in Berlin, or the Corradine in Rome—those are dignified establishments. There an artist is an artist.

LELIA. It used to be so, Mr. Tobacco, but now they are all the same. All you need is a machine; then you turn on the current, and you have an artist. The result is the real artists are obliged to work for nothing. I think my husband is a genius as a contortionist.

TOBACCO. You could not go further than that.

LELIA. And on the wire, without vanity, I go myself as far as anybody—I go farther. I stand on my head with a pirouette and a double flimflam; I am the only woman in Europe who dares to do it.

TOBACCO. Nothing finer could be asked.

JENNY. The second part!....

LELIA. Are you coming in to see the show?

JENNY. Yes, my husband wants to look the Russian over. He's got to pick up a few new tricks.

LELIA. No! Is it possible, Mr. Tobacco? You are joking.

TOBACCO. Mr. Jacob thinks that Russian is funny. Ha, ha!

LELIA. I am waiting for my husband. Kisses to the little ones, Mme. Jenny.

JENNY. And to yours from me, Mme. Lelia.

[TOBACCO *and* JENNY *go out.*

NUNU *and* TOMMY *enter.*

TOMMY. They are here! See?

NUNU. I told you they'd be here. The Prince never goes behind.

TOMMY. Are you going to speak to them?

NUNU. Wait till they call us. You know the Prince? Sit down. Have something? [*They sit down.*

TOMMY. Do we eat there to-night?

NUNU. Yes.

TOMMY. Donina, too?

NUNU. Donina's a fool; she's crazy. She don't want to come. She's jealous of my running around.

TOMMY. Why don't she take on some one herself?

NUNU. She? If she only would! The Prince, say.... Our fortune would be made!

TOMMY. Why don't you make her?

NUNU. Make her? You don't know her. You talk like a fool. She wouldn't do it; but she will out of jealousy. Tell her I am out with another woman, and she'd go if it was to hell, and kick the hat off the devil.

TOMMY. What does the Prince want with Donina?

NUNU. How do I know? He's got the notion; I'm tired of her and I need the money. I need a lot of money, so I can leave this life and settle down like a decent fellow. The Prince is like the rest of them; he doesn't know what he wants.

TOMMY. He doesn't? Did you hear what happened to Fred with the Countess? She gave him money at first and jewels; now she is tired of him and says it was blackmail. She swears she'll call in the police.

NUNU. Police? He's a fool if he stands for that. If I once get my hands on the Prince, I can tell you he won't call in the police.

TOMMY. The Prince? Why not?

NUNU. You idiot! Donina's a minor; she's under age. I know the law. The Prince can't stand for a row. Don't you see?

TOMMY. What's the difference? If I was a Prince, I wouldn't give a damn what I stood for.

NUNU. Neither would I. But that's the way these people are. They want to do as they please, and then they don't want anybody to know about it. That's what costs the money.

TOMMY. You bet; but these fellows always have some one around. They mayn't look it....

NUNU. Not this time. Listen! They want to get him in a fix. Some of those chaps were talking to me—they saw me with him. There's a party in his country that wants to make him Emperor. That's the reason they sent him away.

TOMMY. Oho! So you are a conspirator?

NUNU. I? What do I care? I want the money, that's all we can get out of it. He can be Emperor if he wants to. It's nothing to me; I want to give up this life and go home and marry a decent girl—a girl that's straight. Her father won't have me, though. He says I'm no good; but when he sees I have money, that I amount to something——

TOMMY. But I thought Donina——

NUNU. Donina? I tell you she's the one who's in love with me; I let her like the rest. You know all these actresses are good for: *roba di principi.*

TOMMY. But I thought that you loved her, that you were happy?

NUNU. A man has to live somehow, doesn't he?—with his

eye on something else, more or less far away? Isn't that the way that you live?

TOMMY. Yes, but I am tied up with a wife and the boy. What have I to look forward to?

NUNU. Nothing, for yourself; but you can hope that your children won't be like you—that they will amount to something.

TOMMY. Yes....

NUNU. Well, there you are.

ESTHER. Which is the Prince?

JULIETTE. The youngest—the one who doesn't talk. He never talks. Will you look at that?

ROSINA *and* PEPITA *have seated themselves meanwhile at the* PRINCE'S *table.*

They're taking a chance. Won't they be set up?

ESTHER. What does the Prince come here for, anyway?

JULIETTE. It's the actresses. That Englishman is his secretary; he always brings him along. They're to have supper to-night—the real thing—in a sort of dive, but tough! Awful!

ROSINA *and* PEPITA, *who have been sitting with the* PRINCE, *get up and move away.*

ESTHER. Look! They are blushing. And they are laughing at them!

JULIETTE. I'll give them a pinch as they go out.

ESTHER. No, don't make a scene. Mr. Jacob will take up your pass.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Ah, Harry, I am bored to death! I am sick. What will you find for me to do next?

HARRY LUCENTI. March upon Suavia, proclaim yourself Emperor, and declare war against the world.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Silence, imperialist poet!

HARRY LUCENTI. Why not? I am an Emperor myself.

You remember what Hamlet says? "I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself king of infinite space."

PRINCE FLORENCIO. But he had bad dreams.

HARRY LUCENTI. I do not; I reign within my nutshell. I have founded an empire of myself, at war with all the world. My spirit is an island more impregnable than the cliffs of my country.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. How do you manage it?

HARRY LUCENTI. By making myself hated by everybody. Do you know to what the weaknesses, the compromises, the petty cowardices of human nature are due? They are the result of kindness, of sympathy. We attribute to others virtues which they do not possess, and then, so as to meet them upon an equal footing, we are obliged to pretend to virtues which we do not possess.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. A paradox, I suppose? Well, you haven't made yourself hated by me.

HARRY LUCENTI. Not as yet—because I have never told you the truth.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Why not bring yourself to it? You may if you like.

HARRY LUCENTI. The truth? You poor devil of a Prince, impotent, ridiculous, and rotten to the core!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Bah! Hand me the whiskey.

HARRY LUCENTI. The truth, Florencio, it is the truth. Your escapades! Your vices! You imagine that you are scandalizing the world when you are only shocking the old ladies of Suavia. Your bacchantes are all provided by the restaurant at five hundred francs, everything included. You will find them on the bill—little runaway schoolgirls, whose heads have been turned by reading a couple of silly novels. The depths of hell and infamy into which you descend with trembling are these! I can see you now.... Hail, Emperor! Elagabalus! Child of the sun!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Is that all? You don't suppose you can make me hate you with a few simple truths like that? The times are not propitious to Neros or Elagabaluses; neither do they produce Shakespeares, though you may both have written the same sonnets. There is one, too, copied from the Italian of the seventeenth century——

HARRY LUCENTI. [*Greatly incensed*] That's a lie! I steal from no man. Those stories were invented by my detractors. I proved that Italian sonnet was a forgery, made up to annoy me. I proved it, and nobody believed me. Only a fool would repeat such a story, and you are a fool, too, if you say so!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*Laughing*] My dear Harry, you see it is easier to provoke a poet with the truth than an Emperor.

HARRY LUCENTI. Blockhead!

The PRINCE *rises and moves over toward* NUNU *and* TOMMY.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Come, my dear Harry. Why not arrange something diabolic for this evening, something grandiose? Surely you have credit for more than five hundred francs. Hello, Nunu! Hello, Tommy!

NUNU. Highness!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Sit down. Put on your hats. Have you been on yet?

NUNU. No, ours is next to the last number. We were waiting for you.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Will everybody be there? And your Donina?

NUNU. Donina....

PRINCE FLORENCIO. I told you that you didn't want her to come. Now I see I was right. You want to pass yourself off for a cynic. "*Piccola Donina!*" you say. "Bah! *me n'infischio.* I am tired of her!" And all the while you love her and mean to keep her for yourself.

NUNU. No, your Highness, she is the one who is in love with me. You know that. [*His eye is attracted by a ring on the* PRINCE'S *finger*] What a magnificent ring! May I see it?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Are you fond of jewels?

NUNU. Am I?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. [*His eye lighting upon one of* NUNU'S] So I see.

NUNU. Oh, that's only glass! At night, with the lights, it's all right—when a man can't afford anything else. What is this stone?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. A ruby. This is an opal.

TOMMY. Opals are bad luck.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Not to me; to others, perhaps. Would you be afraid to wear it? [*Tossing him the ring.*

TOMMY. I should say not! [*Putting on the ring*] Thanks, your Highness! Although I shan't have it long. Hard times come with us; that will be the bad luck.

NUNU. [*Offended*] Tommy is your friend now.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. And you are not; I have nothing for you. We are enemies.

NUNU. But suppose I have a surprise for you to-night?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Then I shall give you a ring which will make all your friends die of envy.

NUNU. *Oh, bella!*

PRINCE FLORENCIO. And other things which I know you want besides.

The PRINCE *takes a gold cigarette-case from his pocket and offers cigarettes.*

NUNU. Another! Gold, too....everything is gold. But this one has jewels.... Is this your name?

PRINCE FLORENCIO. No, some English verses; that is all. Keep it, Nunu.

NUNU. Your Highness!

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Keep it, I tell you.

NUNU. *Oh, bella!* Look, Tommy! Diamonds; and these are like yours.

TOMMY. Rubies!

NUNU. Did you say they were verses? [*Reading.*]

"O, you, the master-mistress"——

I can't read any more.

HARRY LUCENTI. You won't be any worse off.

NUNU. Here come Donina and Zaida.

HARRY LUCENTI. That Arab girl?—at least that is what she calls herself.

NUNU. It's a fact, though. She's from Constantina in Algiers; she's a Jewess. She did Oriental dances; then her manager turned her over to ours, so since then she has been dancing with us. She'd pass for a Neapolitan.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. I thought she was one.

NUNU. She's always crying—that is her sort. She cries over everything.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Who pays the bills?

NUNU. No one; she isn't that way. She likes me, though, pretty well; she's such a friend of Donina's that if I say anything, she's up in a minute. She's in love with Donina, daft over her. And fierce as a lion!

HARRY LUCENTI. Pretty soon it will be love all around through the triangle.

NUNU. No, she's a lamb.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. No wonder, living with you. We shall meet you then later. Do you go straight from here?

NUNU. Just as we are; it's all arranged.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Nobody will be missing?

NUNU. No, I'll show you who's your friend.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. Good-by. Come along, Harry. [*Discovering* IMPERIA, *who has entered a few moments previously, with* DONINA *and* ZAIDA] Ah! Imperia! Harry, do you see?

NUNU *and* TOMMY *go over to the group of women.* DONINA *gets up and begins to dispute with* NUNU, *somewhat apart from the others.*

HARRY LUCENTI. Yes, and I know the attraction: an old friendship with Donina's mother, a purely sisterly affair—these affairs are always sisterly. They belonged to the same troupe. She heard the girl was playing here, so she dropped in to see her; now she has dropped in again. At least this is official.

PRINCE FLORENCIO. My uncle cannot know that she comes to this place; he would not consider it respectable in his mistress. We must see that he does know.

HARRY LUCENTI. Of course! To tell unpleasant truths is always a duty.

The PRINCE *and* HARRY LUCENTI *go out.*

NUNU. [*To* DONINA] Did you see who I was talking to?

DONINA. Yes, and I saw you with her on the stage. Haven't I eyes? Can't I see? There's nobody else left; it was that Japanese woman as long as her husband was here with his act. I know there's a supper to-night, too; but you haven't counted on me.

NUNU. But we have, though; you're invited.

DONINA. I am, am I? So that before my very eyes—Oh, I don't mind so much your fooling with other girls, hugging them and kissing them! It isn't that....but when anybody tries it on me, you stand there and laugh. You consent to it.

NUNU. You're a fool.

He takes the case out of his pocket and lights a cigarette.

DONINA. [*Discovering the case*] Whose is that? Who gave that to you? What does it say?

NUNU. Ha, ha, ha!

DONINA. [*Furious, stamping on the box*] There! Now it doesn't say anything. No, and it won't say anything either. And I'd do the same to you, too, or to anybody!

NUNU. Donina! What are you doing? You've ruined it. I tell you—— [*Threatening her.*

IMPERIA *and* ZAIDA. [*Interfering*] No, no, don't touch her, Nunu!

NUNU. If we weren't in this place——

DONINA. Yes, strike me! Kill me! Anything better than this!

ZAIDA. [*Throwing her arms about her*] Donina! Poor Donina!

NUNU. Come along, Tommy, and get dressed. Come along! She'll be there, all right.

NUNU *and* TOMMY *go out.*

ZAIDA. You mustn't cry before all these people. Don't let them see.

DONINA. What do I care?

IMPERIA. Will you come with me?

DONINA. No, I must stay with him, even if he kills me! He didn't use to be like this; he used to love me. Of course he went with other girls, I know that, but I was always his Donina, I was always first, the only one among the rest. I was so proud to have them love him, and to think that after he had played with them and laughed in their faces, he would come back again to me, always to me, without ever having been able to forget. But it is not the same now. He has something back in his mind, something evil. It isn't that he deceives me; it's that he wants me to know it. And since these men came——

ZAIDA. Nunu is bad; he is all bad now. I loved him before and Donina wasn't jealous. She knew it was on her account—it was just from the heart, I was like their sister; Donina knows that. But Nunu is changed now. He doesn't want to play and sing and laugh any more, and he always used to be happy. And when he was happy, everybody about him was smiling.

DONINA. Yes, they were. We were so happy!

ZAIDA. We used to spend hours by ourselves, laughing and singing and dancing, just for the joy of it, for our own sakes, without ever getting tired or stopping to think that we would have to sing and dance all night long in the theatre.

DONINA. We were so happy!

ZAIDA. And we would have been happy always, just the three of us!

DONINA. It's those men, those terrible men—that Prince who is so pale that he freezes your blood with his eye.

IMPERIA. Yes, the Prince! I know him. His only pleasure is to torture and defile.

DONINA. But I'll go to-night. He wants me to.

IMPERIA. No, anything rather than that. Go with the man you love, who is one with you, to whom you have given your heart, live as he lives, share his sorrows, his joys, let nothing hold you back; but the Prince—never go near that man! Nothing can come from him but evil, degradation, and shame. The women he loves he dresses in rags—he maltreats them without mercy. His friends are miserable wretches whom his money can buy, and there is no depravity he does not know. He gives young girls to old men, unutterably vile; strong, healthy boys to women who are loathsome and diseased. He buys daughters from their parents, sisters from their brothers for his holidays. I have seen him run through the streets in Suavia at midnight, when it was bitter cold and the ground was covered with ice, and gather up the

poor, homeless wretches, starving vagrants, sleeping out-of-doors, and lead them to the morgue, which was filled with suicides and the bodies of those who had been murdered, or who had died in the streets from hunger and cold. There are myriads of them in the winter-time—men and women and children, too. It was horrible! He threw money on the corpses, and the terrible struggle of that maddened throng, frenzied at the sight of the gold, was an awful thing to see. One coin fell into an open wound; a hundred hands grappled upon it. They pushed the bodies aside, they trampled them under foot, while he—he did not even smile; he looked and looked as the devil must look from hell upon the crimes poor wretches commit who are hungry and cold, crushed beneath the selfishness of the heartless and the rich. This is that Prince who is so pale that he freezes the blood with his eye.

DONINA. I did not hate him for nothing. Nunu shall not go with him to-night—or he will never see me any more!

IMPERIA. Will you come with me?

DONINA. No, not without him. I said that he would never see me, because I would kill myself; I could never leave him in any other way.

IMPERIA. Love in life or in death! Be it so.

ZAIDA. The music, Donina! The act before our number. We must not be late....

DONINA. No, to sing and dance! But he shall not go to-night! He shall not go! Are you coming in to see me?

IMPERIA. Yes.

DONINA. Good-by, then. Give me a kiss. [*Indicating* ZAIDA] And one for her, too.

ZAIDA. I love you, too, Signora—all, all who love Donina.

ZAIDA *and* DONINA *go out.* *The* COUNTESS RINALDI *and* LEONARDO *enter.*

LEONARDO. Having rescued you from one danger, how is

it that I surprise you now in the company of Ruhu-Sahib, the elephant-driver?

RINALDI. But surely you do not suppose?.... A Hindu, a savage?.... I was merely gathering points about his elephants. He is a remarkable man. The life of these circus people is vastly more entertaining than ours. I wonder what you would think if I should decide to join the circus? What would people say?

LEONARDO. Probably that you were settling down. In the light of your experience, it might not appear surprising.

RINALDI. This conventional life is a horrible bore. It is unrelieved monotony.

LEONARDO. If you were to suppress the most monotonous feature of your life, it would be a horrible bore.

RINALDI. Come, invite me to take something. I'll have an ice, a *tutti-frutti*. They are delicious.

LEONARDO. With pleasure.... Ah! Imperia. Do you see?

RINALDI. Yes, and I have seen her here before.

LEONARDO. How extraordinary! And alone. In that gown!

RINALDI. She is always gowned imperially. She is an artist, although not in my line.

LEONARDO. I do not understand——

RINALDI. Why be so innocent? You know your model better than I do. By the way, what was she like when she was with you? I have heard so many stories.

LEONARDO. I met her in Rome. She was one of the models who hang about the *Piazza di Spagna*. Donina was her name at the time. She was a spare, pinched figure, clad in rags, with a suggestion about her that was indescribably sordid and poor. This terrible poverty of the great cities is not only want of bread, it is hunger for everything which

goes to make life dear. Among the other models she attracted no attention. The painters saw nothing in her; neither did I. But one day she stopped me as I was passing to beg some coppers. There was no weakness in her voice, no note of complaint; the tone was firm and strong. It compelled attention. So I spoke to her, and her face lit up as we talked, she became a different person—there was another look in her eyes, a new expressiveness in every feature. She was no longer the poor, pinched model; she was a work of art—she was my statue, Imperia, which soon afterward made my reputation. Do you remember? There it stood, with feet bare, and tattered skirt, the body half naked as if she had just clambered up a precipice, and by a last, despairing effort was sinking exhausted on the top into a throne, while upon her face there shone an ineffable light, the smile of life triumphant over death—or of death itself and its calm. It is a long time since I have seen the statue. My ideas of art are not what they were then, but I am sure there was something in it. The combination of the materials was audacious: the rocks of the pedestal were of granite, the figure was marble, and the throne gilded bronze, which shone like gold.

RINALDI. What was the significance of the statue?

LEONARDO. How can I tell? An artist believes that he speaks through his works, but the works take on form and speak for themselves. The statue was—you can see it—it was woman, Imperia, a wretched creature who has climbed up over the rocks, her body lacerated and torn, until she is about to seat herself upon a throne. Perhaps it was something more—the mastery of life and all that is in it, achieved at last by the poor and the outcast! How can I tell? It was the might of the soul to realize its dream! And who of us has not his dream, at least of a throne—a throne where

our selfishness, perhaps, is absolute, or our disinterested love?

RINALDI. How long did you remain with Imperia?

LEONARDO. A passing moment, that was all. The same breath which inspired my statue infused new life into Donina. She became my statue made woman, she was Imperia. Prince Florencio met her at my studio as I was finishing my work; she was still the poor, tattered Donina with her hunger-pinched face. You know the Prince. Well, one morning she said good-by. "Where are you going, my child?" I asked her. "To Suavia to be Empress," she replied. And I had not the heart to laugh at her; there was such conviction in her words, such burning faith in her eyes, it was impossible not to believe it. That woman might be Empress.

RINALDI. Does she still cherish her dream?

LEONARDO. I lost sight of her. Afterward, I heard that Prince Florencio had abused her, and she attempted to kill him; so she was banished from Suavia. Later, she fell in with Prince Michael in Paris, and during these last years she has been living with him. She has grown rich.

RINALDI. Prince Michael is the richest of the Suavian princes.

LEONARDO. He is prodigal as a monarch of other days.

RINALDI. What empire like riches to dominate the world? Well, so this is the very practical reality into which the imperial dreams of your Imperia have been resolved? Was not the throne of your statue gilded until it shone like gold?

LEONARDO. Yes, like gold—because the sun is gold, and the light is. It was the embodiment of light, of hope, of the ideal!

IMPERIA *rises and moves over to speak with them.*

IMPERIA. Countess! Leonardo! You did not see me?

RINALDI. I beg your pardon, I am sorry....

IMPERIA. But you were talking about me.

RINALDI. You couldn't hear us from there?

IMPERIA. No, but it was easy to see. You looked over continually. Were you surprised to find me here?

RINALDI. Certainly not; we are here ourselves.

LEONARDO. Perhaps the Countess will explain the reason?

RINALDI. It is not necessary. We are all here for the same thing, more or less. We may be perfectly frank if we like; no one will remember to-morrow.

IMPERIA. We are like witches, meeting on Saturday night. I was a little girl when I first heard the legend, and you remind me of it now. There was a poor woman who lived near our house; she was very old, and, apparently, very respectable. She lived alone, and you would have said that she was a good woman. Her house was clean; she worked in the garden by day, busy with her flowers, or fed the pigeons; at night she sewed a little on her quaint old clothes. She was never idle—it was a calm and peaceful life, lived openly in the sun. But people said that she was a witch, and every Saturday at midnight, as the clock struck twelve, she mounted a broomstick and flew away to the witches' lair, and there with the other witches she did homage to Satan; and if you could surprise them then, you would see them as they really were. One day, some time later, at dawn on a Sunday morning, the old woman was found dead, out of her bed, at some distance from her house, in an open field, and there was a dagger in her heart. But nobody could ever find the assassin, nor discover any motive for the murder, nor could any one ever explain the reason why that woman should have been found in that place on that morning, when she had been seen closing the door of her house as usual the night before, and in the morning, when they carried the body there, the door was still closed.

RINALDI. But you don't really mean?.... Nonsense! Then you would have to believe in witches.

IMPERIA. No, not in such witches. But there comes a Saturday Night in all our lives, even the most peaceful of them, when our souls, like the witches, fly to their lairs. We exist for years to reach one hour which is vital and real. Then our witches' souls take flight, some toward their hopes and ambitions, some toward their vices, their follies, others toward their loves—toward something which is far from and alien to our lives, but which has always smouldered in us, and at heart is what we are.

RINALDI. It is true. And to-night we are in our lair. We may salute each other. Hail, sister!

IMPERIA. Sister and brother, hail! Whither away, toward good or toward ill?

LEONARDO. I? Where life dissolves in the desert and is gone like the flower.

RINALDI. I? To the Kingdom of Love where joy is—joy that outlasts death.

LEONARDO. And you, Imperia?

IMPERIA. I? To find myself, to find Donina, poor, ignorant Donina—Donina in love. Your art has revealed to me the light that was in me, and I follow my dream!

LEONARDO. Which is?....

IMPERIA. To grow, to become rich! For money is power. With it, all things are possible, for good or for evil, for justice or revenge!

RINALDI. The performance is over. The people are coming out.

LEONARDO. It is time to go.

A number of SPECTATORS *and* PERFORMERS *enter, among the latter* RUHU-SAHIB.

RINALDI. There! Do you see? The Hindu.... I wonder if it would be possible to interest you in the taming of elephants?

LEONARDO. No, but it might in the taming of elephant-drivers. We can sit with him if you like.

RINALDI. Don't be absurd. You are not accustomed to heroic adventure.

LEONARDO. I aspire merely to look on.

ZAIDA re-enters in tears; she runs up to IMPERIA *and throws her arms about her.*

ZAIDA. Signora! Signora! Didn't you hear? Donina——

IMPERIA. What is the matter?

ZAIDA. She's mad! She wouldn't listen! After what you told her. . . . She's gone with Nunu and those people —with the Prince!

IMPERIA. That wretched Nunu has sold her. Quick! Do you know where they are?

ZAIDA. Yes, they went without changing, just as they were! I know the place—that is, I don't know the name, but I can find it.

IMPERIA. Come with me.

ZAIDA. Yes. . . . But not like this. You don't know these people.

IMPERIA. What difference does it make? They are my people, and they will know me. I return to prevent another betrayal of one of us, or to revenge with one blow a thousand. Come! Countess, good night. Good night, Leonardo.

LEONARDO. Good night, Imperia.

RINALDI. Where are you going, Imperia?

IMPERIA. To meet other witches' souls in their lairs. It is Saturday Night.

The café has filled with people. The gypsy orchestra begins to play.

Curtain

THE THIRD TABLEAU

Cecco's tavern.

Night.

SAILORS *and evil-looking persons sit about in groups, drinking and playing cards.* CECCO *and* GAETANO *move among them serving wine.* MAJESTÁ, *an old hag, at a table alone, apparently asleep.* PIETRO *and others in the background.*

THIRD SAILOR. Hand over the money; it comes to me. Bring more wine. I'll pay.

GAETANO. You will?

SECOND SAILOR. Don't play any more.

THIRD SAILOR. Let go!

SECOND SAILOR. I've had enough; I take out my money.

THIRD SAILOR. Take it out, man; take it out. It's quits. Don't talk.

SECOND SAILOR. No, if you're going to play——

FIRST SAILOR. Going to play? Who's going to play?

THIRD SAILOR. Come on! Hand over! Here's my pile.

GAETANO. [*Aside to* CECCO] Who are these people? I don't know them.

CECCO. Off a yacht which got in this morning. Can't you see the name? How does it go?

GAETANO. All right; they have money. They keep a sharp watch.

CECCO. So I see. Play them easy. No trouble to-night, do you hear? Then they won't squeal. They'll be back to-morrow.

GAETANO. I'll let them go now, if you say so....

CECCO. No. It wouldn't do. We can't empty the place. So long as they are quiet——

The COMMISSARY OF POLICE *enters.*

COMMISSARY. Hello, Cecco!

CECCO. Hello! Anything new?

COMMISSARY. No, nothing. We saw the Prince come in.

CECCO. Yes, he's inside.

COMMISSARY. Who is with him?

CECCO. I don't know them all. The Englishman, those circus people.

COMMISSARY. [*Consulting a list*] Let's see if I have them. Here, check them off. Lucenti, the Englishman; Nunu and Tommy of the Neapolitan troupe; Donina, Celeste, Teresina, women from the same troupe; Dick and Fred, jockeys of the Duke of Zealand; two English girls; Marcella, a cocotte—Are there any more?

CECCO. No, that's all.

COMMISSARY. Good. If anything happens, we are outside.

CECCO. I'll send out something. It's cold to-night.

COMMISSARY. Yes; and have it hot. There's a fog over the sea. Good night, Cecco. Who are these?

CECCO. The same as usual.

COMMISSARY. Those sailors?

CECCO. A yacht which got in this morning. Don't you know?

COMMISSARY. Yes, I know. Good night.

[*The* COMMISSARY *goes out.*

FIRST SAILOR. Big fish here to-night. Is it all right?

CECCO. Yes, it's all right. What you see, you see; understand? And shut up!

AN UNKNOWN. [*Going up to* MAJESTÁ *and shaking her*] Hi,

there, old woman! How is it you're not at the party? Wake up!

CECCO. Let her alone. She don't trouble you.

UNKNOWN. The Prince forgot to invite her. Maybe he didn't know she was here. You ought to have told him who you were. "I am as good as you are, your Highness. I was a queen once. They still call me Majestá!"

OTHERS. [*Laughing*] Ha, ha, ha! Majestá!

MAJESTÁ. Dogs!

CECCO. Let her alone, can't you? Don't mind them, Majestá.

MAJESTÁ. I? I don't see them or hear them. They are all far away.

THIRD SAILOR. Is she out of her head?

PIETRO. No, but by this time.... Don't you see? It's the wine.

CECCO. It's true, though, what she says. Take it from me. We've had people here who know. She was handsome once, and she was loved by a king. She had horses and diamonds and palaces.

THIRD SAILOR. Palaces? Lies!

UNKNOWN. She must have changed a lot; she must have grown old. It isn't possible! I don't believe it.

THIRD SAILOR. But when you look at her close....

UNKNOWN. Come, tell us the story. What king was it, eh? Where were those palaces?

PIETRO. Come on, old woman! Give us the story. He was a king, was he? Palaces? They were lies!

CECCO. Let her alone, damn you!

MAJESTÁ. Fools! Dogs! What have I to say to you? Can you see, except with your eyes? You cannot understand. Look at me. Well, I was beautiful once, and pictures of my face and models of my form adorn palaces and

museums. But if I took you to them and said "Look! This is I!" you would not believe it. Many have loved me, many that were great, many that were rich, many that were wise—yes, even a king. For one word of mine he would have forsaken his throne. Do you see me now? Then I was dressed in brocades and covered all with pearls—pearls that outpriced a kingdom! In a day I spent upon flowers enough to last me the rest of my life. You do not believe it? No? Look! Come here.... [*Pulling off a pair of old woollen mittens*] Here are these hands that never worked. Do you see? They are the hands of a queen. Many have kissed them in their time—on their knees—and they thanked me for it. I am proud of them. And sometimes it is cold and I have nothing to wear, and sometimes I am hungry and have nothing to eat, but I never want for gloves. Look at them! Are they not the hands of a queen?

PIETRO. It's true. She's right.

UNKNOWN. Something had to be left her. You can still let them kiss your hands.

MAJESTÁ. You might have all the riches of kings, you might conquer the earth, you might raise yourselves upon thrones, yet your children would not have such hands.

PIETRO. Slippery hands, to let so much slide through them.

UNKNOWN. They might have kept something more than their whiteness. She wouldn't be where she is now if what she said was true.

MAJESTÁ. These hands never learned to save. Jewels ran through them like water through a fountain, and were scattered as they ran.

UNKNOWN. You must have given away lots of money.

PIETRO. And done much good.

MAJESTÁ. Good or evil, as it came. People came to me who were poor, people came to me who were bad—it was all

the same. If one were to stop to think! We must pass the good things of life along. Would you refuse a penny for fear that it was to buy drink? That is enough to make the devil laugh. To some, drink is more than meat. Can beggars eat flowers? But the earth gives us flowers. The heart is dried up that will not give of its flowers.

PIETRO. She's right.

UNKNOWN. She speaks the truth. Poor old woman!

CECCO. I told you she wasn't crazy. Come, boys, buy her a drink.

PIETRO. Let her have what she wants.

MAJESTÁ. I don't care. What you've got.

THIRD SAILOR. Champagne, eh? Champagne—for a queen!

UNKNOWN. Champagne! At least champagne! Bring champagne. Here's the money.

PIETRO. Have you champagne?

CECCO. To-night, yes. I'll bring it—if it's not a joke....

UNKNOWN. If the Prince won't invite you, we will.

MAJESTÁ. The Prince of Suavia? I knew the Emperor; I can see him now on his white horse. Then he was heir apparent. He must be very old. And I knew the Princess Etelvina, the mother of this Prince. She was a little child, and I kissed her.

CECCO. The champagne. Bring glasses.

PIETRO. To her Majesty! Up! Would you like to live long, Majestá?

MAJESTÁ. Why not? As God wills.

PIETRO. Then—to your health!

MAJESTÁ. And yours, and happiness! It is not too late for you. Yes, it is champagne.

CECCO. What did you think?

MAJESTÁ. That it was a dream. It is so long since I

tasted champagne.... God reward you for it. Another glass! It is a rare wine, and this is not bad champagne. I know, Cecco.

PIETRO. You are not the only majesty who's here to-night.

IMPERIA *and* ZAIDA *appear in the doorway.*

IMPERIA. Is this the place?

ZAIDA. Yes, Signora. Are you afraid?

IMPERIA. Why should I be afraid? My home was like this. Come in.

PIETRO. [*Discovering* IMPERIA] Another Queen! Ha! This is a night of queens.

CECCO. Silence!

PIETRO. Is that the way you looked, Majestá?

UNKNOWN. Do you know this Queen?

MAJESTÁ. Queen? Bah! No more than I was! No, I don't know her. The queens that I knew are all dead or have grown old.

IMPERIA. Where is the Prince? Don't attempt to deny it; I know he is here. I know who is with him.

CECCO. Was he expecting you? They said nothing....

IMPERIA. No, he was not expecting me. Wait.... [*She scribbles something with a pencil upon a piece of paper*] Give him this and bring me back the answer. At once!

CECCO. It may....but.... Won't you sit down?

IMPERIA. I'll wait here. Is there no other place?

CECCO. No. Only a hole there—up-stairs.

IMPERIA. Don't be long.

CECCO. It's all right; they won't hurt you. They're good fellows. Don't be afraid.

IMPERIA. I am not afraid.

ZAIDA. Signora! I ought not to have told you!

IMPERIA. Why not? Why should I be afraid? The

place and the people do not seem strange; it is I who seem strange.

PIETRO. [*To* MAJESTÁ] Yes, give her a glass. Invite her. You ought to do it—among friends!

UNKNOWN. Yes, between queens! Do the honors. You ought.

MAJESTÁ. [*Staggering to her feet; then, with a drunken leer*] Here.... Let me have it.... [*Offering a glass to* IMPERIA] Lady....

ZAIDA. [*Alarmed*] *Ay!*

IMPERIA. Don't be afraid. What is it, my poor woman?

MAJESTÁ. Your Majesty, I....I also am a Queen....a Queen....Majestá.... Don't you know me?

PIETRO. Don't mind her. She won't hurt you. She's only a bit out of her head.

MAJESTÁ. To-night I'm holding a feast in my palace. I offer you a glass of champagne. Drink! It will not hurt you. It is not poison. I have no reason to wish you harm. You cannot hurt me. I am happy, oh, so happy! Who can take this happiness away? But they are not all like this. No! There are bad people—bad! Take care! And they have done me harm, much harm. But I....I have harmed nobody! Nobody! That's the reason I am so happy! That's the happiness that none can take away!

ZAIDA. Signora! Come, let us go——

IMPERIA. No, I must hear her. These are the discords, the broken harmonies of the mad. They fascinate me. There is something wild and eerie in them, which may prove prophetic in the end. Come here, my poor woman.

[*Offering money.*

MAJESTÁ. Gold! Do you see? It is gold! More champagne! [*Throwing down the money*] Champagne!

PIETRO. Here! Pick it up! You'll need it.

MAJESTÁ. Need it? No, no! Never! It's for you! I never need anything any more. Champagne! Bring champagne! [*She falls senseless.*

HARRY LUCENTI *enters.*

HARRY LUCENTI. Imperia!

IMPERIA. The Prince?

HARRY LUCENTI. The Prince requests me to offer you my arm—now that you have come so far. Will you join us?

IMPERIA. Does the Prince know why I have come?

HARRY LUCENTI. Pleasure, perhaps; jealousy....

IMPERIA. Of whom?

HARRY LUCENTI. We saw you at the circus this evening.

IMPERIA. And you imagined something monstrous of me, something worthy of the Prince and yourself?

HARRY LUCENTI. A little something of the sort. The Prince will be delighted to see you. Will you accept my arm?

IMPERIA. Take me in. [*A piercing cry*] What is that?

CECCO. [*Enters, running*] What's the matter?

HARRY LUCENTI. Who cried out?

CECCO. [*Closing the door*] Silence. Sit down! Quiet! Nobody moves! [*Runs out.*

UNKNOWN. What's the matter?

CECCO *re-enters with* TOMMY, *supporting the* PRINCE; *also* CELESTE, TERESINA, NELLY, FANNY, *and the two jockeys, followed immediately by* NUNU, DONINA, *and* MARCELLA, *all in the greatest confusion.*

SOME. What's the matter? What has happened?

CECCO. The Prince!

IMPERIA. Blood!

HARRY LUCENTI. Are you hurt?

SAILORS *and* OTHERS. Up! Up! What's wrong? Out! Out!

CECCO. [*To* GAETANO] Lock the door! Stand by! God! Nobody moves!

GAETANO *draws a knife and stands by the door.*

PIETRO. Room there! Back! Or....

They draw knives and daggers.

CECCO. No! No you don't! You'd only run into the police. They'd pull us all. Order! Quiet! Sit down!

NUNU. [*Furiously to* DONINA] It was you! You did it! We are ruined!

DONINA. Yes! It was I! I! It was not you! You coward!

IMPERIA. You?

DONINA. He sold me! Do you hear? He sold me! Coward! Coward!

CELESTE. But they're not going to let him die like this?

CECCO. No one leaves this room.

HARRY LUCENTI. No blood? He bleeds internally; a bad sign. He'll never get up.

CECCO. The police! They've heard us. Run! Quick! Sit down! If they knock we'll have to open. Keep cool! This blood— [*He overturns a bottle*] There! Sit down! And you.... Get around him! Back! Hold him up! So.... And you there, sing—sing and dance! Music! The police! Sh!.... Quiet!....

All do as he tells them.

DONINA. My God! My God!

NUNU. [*Striking her*] Dance! Dance, I tell you!

The music strikes up.

NUNU, DONINA, ZAIDA, *and* TOMMY *begin the tarantella.*

The COMMISSARY OF POLICE *enters.*

COMMISSARY. What's this noise? What's the matter?

CECCO. Nothing! You see....

COMMISSARY. We heard cries....

CECCO. The supper. Too much wine, eh? Is it so? Nobody knows what he's at. They're in fine spirits. The Prince can hardly sit up. Ah! There he is.... We shut the door so that nobody could come in. It's late. Have a drop?

COMMISSARY. No, thanks. Good night.

CECCO. Good night!

At the door, keeping his eyes riveted on those in the tavern until the COMMISSARY *is out of sight; then to those within:*

Go on! Go on! Keep it up!

The women who have been sitting at the PRINCE'S *side spring up terrified. The* PRINCE *rolls under the table.*

CELESTE. Dead!

TERESINA. *Ay!*

Wild confusion. All rush for the door.

CECCO. Ruined! Lost! Now what are we to do? No one leaves this room!

NUNU. [*Threatening violence*] Open the door! Let us out!

CECCO. No! It's no use. The police have got your names. They'd pick you all up, one by one. We stand or fall together.

IMPERIA. Harry! Take him to my house—in my carriage. It's the only way. They must not find him here. Then we can think. Are you ready?

HARRY LUCENTI. Yes. Come on! Quick!

CECCO. Are you going to take him away? Yes, it's the best. But wait.... There may be people in the street. A moment.... Wait.... I'll draw off the police. Sit down! And you there—come on! Come on! One at a time. Pass out as if nothing had happened. Order! Quiet!

PIETRO. The first man who opens his mouth....

UNKNOWN. Not a word! Silence! It's for all.

CECCO. And you—sing and dance! Damn you! Dance!

DONINA. [*Falling exhausted*] I can't dance any more! Not if they kill me!

CECCO. [*Going up to* MAJESTÁ] This woman has seen nothing.... The others will say nothing.

HARRY LUCENTI. [*At the* PRINCE'S *side*] He is dead. Cold already!

IMPERIA. Yes. Dead! Dead! How horrible!

Curtain

THE FOURTH TABLEAU

A room in IMPERIA'S *villa.*

IMPERIA *is discovered writing a note, which she hands to a* SERVANT *when finished. The voice of the* COUNTESS RINALDI *is heard outside.*

RINALDI. [*Outside*] She is always at home to me. Do not trouble....

IMPERIA *rises and goes hurriedly to meet the* COUNTESS, *who enters.*

IMPERIA. Countess!

RINALDI. Ah! You were not expecting me? The *portiere* and the servants did not wish to let me come in; they told me you were resting. But it was so very important that I had to see you; so I dispensed with formality. I am pardoned, I know. But you are not alone? On my way here I passed Prince Michael at the gate of the Princess's villa, no doubt intending to visit her.

IMPERIA. No doubt. Did you speak to him?

RINALDI. No, he was driving; I was walking. I walk a great deal for my health, nowadays. We merely bowed, that was all. Well, what was the outcome of your rendezvous of last evening, the denouement of Saturday night?

IMPERIA. Saturday night?

RINALDI. I fear you are not frank with me; you are keeping something back, much as I love you. It would be interesting to confide impressions, compare adventures, as it were. I have decided to make a change in my life; I am done with frivolity. Fortunately Heaven has put a man in my path

who has proved my salvation. Ah, if I had only met him before, instead of all those worthless scamps who have compromised my reputation!

IMPERIA. Who is he?

RINALDI. He is not a man of the sort one meets every day. His is a primitive spirit, a simple soul. You know him.

IMPERIA. I?

RINALDI. Haven't you seen the seven elephants at the circus?

IMPERIA. But my dear Countess!

RINALDI. Well, he is the elephant-driver. Are you laughing at me?

IMPERIA. I thought that you said you were done with frivolity.

RINALDI. Surely you do not imply that this is frivolity? But you are not acquainted with my plans.

IMPERIA. Then explain them to me! Talk, make me understand. Would to God they were never so fantastic, so extravagant and strange, dreams, fantasies, anything to take me out of myself, to make me forget this reality which is shutting in around me. If you only knew! There are dreams, horrible nightmares with all the appearance of truth, which escape from our sleep and enter our lives. I have dreamed, I am sure that I have dreamed, something which now I seem to have seen, to have heard, but which cannot be, no, which cannot have been. That is the reason I want to hear you talk, to listen to your extravagances, follies, dreams, madness, until all becomes confused and lost in illusion, and we cannot tell whether we are dreaming among visions or waking among facts which are real.

RINALDI. But there is nothing visionary about my plans, they are practical. I am setting my house in order, I am devoting myself to my affairs. Luckily, a unique opportunity

has presented itself, a brilliant speculation, which cannot fail to triple my capital in less than a year.

IMPERIA. You don't know how glad I am to see you. Really, you put every rational thought quite out of my head.

RINALDI. But you must not laugh; it is a serious matter. Ruhu—his name is Ruhu—an Oriental name.... well, Ruhu is not the real Ruhu.

IMPERIA. I don't understand.

RINALDI. The real Ruhu-Sahib was the former proprietor of the elephants; this man was merely his assistant, that was all. When the real Ruhu died, his widow, who was English, inherited the seven elephants, and she proposed to the assistant that he continue in charge, and manage all seven upon a salary which she was to pay him. But it was exploitation. While the poor Ruhu exposed his life every day for the most pitiful wages, the widow, the proprietress of the elephants, was collecting wholly fabulous sums from the management. What do you think of that? The poor are justified in rising up against such exploitation. Ruhu was broken-hearted. "Ah, if the elephants were only mine," he said to me with tears in his eyes, "if I had a hundred thousand francs! If I could find some one to associate herself with me!"

IMPERIA. You need say no more; you were touched. You determined to buy the elephants and present yourself with them in the circus.

RINALDI. Not I. How ridiculous! I am to buy them; he is to present them. I shall receive half the profits. You have no conception of what that will amount to. Twelve thousand francs a month, and they are engaged for the entire season. Seven tame elephants for a hundred thousand francs—it's a bargain. Really, you have no idea what it costs nowadays to buy an elephant. And these are the best Indian elephants. You can tell them by the trunk and the ears.

IMPERIA. I see that you have studied the subject. This is not an illusion, after all.

RINALDI. On the contrary, in what other way could one get so much for a hundred thousand francs? That is the reason I hurried to see you. At the moment, I do not happen to have such a sum at my disposal—my balance at the *Crédit* is not above sixty or seventy thousand francs. But it is only a matter of a fortnight. Of course, any of my friends whom I had cared to approach....but I was anxious to afford you a striking proof of my affection.

IMPERIA. I should like to respond in the same spirit, but at present I am unable to give you an answer. I don't know whether or not I have so much money.

RINALDI. You don't call that much money?

IMPERIA. I shall let you know this afternoon—later.

RINALDI. Later? I am afraid this is coyness upon your part. Surely the Prince will not deny you; he never denies you anything. You see that I am speaking as a friend, and our friendship has cost me something. Not that it matters, of course....

IMPERIA. I shall send you my answer.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. His Highness.

PRINCE MICHAEL *enters.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Countess! [*To* IMPERIA] How are you this morning?

IMPERIA. Quite well. The Countess tells me that she passed you at the Princess's villa. Were you calling on her?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Yes, I was to have taken luncheon. Haven't you heard?

IMPERIA. What?

PRINCE MICHAEL. I will tell you later. I was unable to join you at the circus last evening. Another telegram from Suavia detained me with the Duke.

IMPERIA. What has happened?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Nothing....

RINALDI. Your Highness has some private matter to discuss with Imperia.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Nothing that cannot wait.

RINALDI. Although I dispense with invitations which are not dispensed to me, I hardly need one to withdraw when my presence might prove embarrassing. Good morning, your Highness.—My dear, I shall remain at home all afternoon, expecting your reply.

The COUNTESS RINALDI *goes out.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. How much did the Countess's visit cost you?

IMPERIA. I see that you have had experience.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I most certainly have. However, her adventures are always amusing. This one ought to be worth something. Leonardo sent her to me. She must have told you—an affair at the circus. Well, what about Donina? Did you find her last evening? You see what confidence I have in you: I believe everything you say.

IMPERIA. You are right to do so. You have been noble and generous with me, and your loyalty deserves mine in return. You have not bound me to you by appealing to my self-interest. You have given me more than enough to buy my liberty; you said that you did not want slaves. And in giving me my liberty, you have won my gratitude forever.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Forever? Your mind is restless, ambitious, filled with great dreams, while I—I am content to have all my days pass alike, to have them seem as one day, undisturbed by trouble or care, flowing smoothly in a calm and even stream. But the shadow of the empire has fallen upon me again. The baby Prince is dead.

IMPERIA. Dead?....

PRINCE MICHAEL. He was born with a mere spark of life.

They telegraphed again directly after the announcement of his birth. The Emperor has summoned Prince Florencio and his mother to return to court; he wishes to become reconciled, perhaps to abdicate. He is not well; the country is on the brink of revolution. A despotic government is no longer possible in these days. Then, Florencio's health is conspiring against me. Once more near the throne!

IMPERIA. Very near! Prince Florencio, that is all. Have you seen him to-day?

PRINCE MICHAEL. No, I was to have taken luncheon at their villa, but his mother was horribly disturbed. Florencio had not returned all night.

IMPERIA. Don't they know....?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Nothing could have happened to him. A debauch! Morning surprised him in some tavern; it was impossible to return home in broad daylight. I have notified the Prefect.

IMPERIA. But you say his mother....

PRINCE MICHAEL. This anxiety will kill her. She cannot endure it; it is one continual agitation. To-day she was more affected than usual. She woke suddenly at midnight; she thought she heard a cry——

IMPERIA. At midnight?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Yes. Now to her mind it has taken the form of a presentiment, and I confess that I was myself affected by it, although of course nothing could have happened. The police are with him continually; it is out of the question. Besides, nobody has seen Harry Lucenti. However, the Signore will know.

IMPERIA. Have you any idea where he was?

PRINCE MICHAEL. No, but they will have, and they will know who was with him. Otherwise.... You don't think that anything could have happened to him?

IMPERIA. You say that his mother heard a cry? Do you believe that spirits can communicate at a distance, that they can speak with each other through the air? He must have been thinking of his mother—yes, he called out "Mother!" And his mother heard him call.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia, what are you talking about? Are you dreaming?

IMPERIA. Something must have happened to him. Yes, we must fear, we must expect the worst.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. The Signor Prefect to see your Highness.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Immediately! Now we shall know.

PRINCE MICHAEL *and the* SERVANT *go out.*

IMPERIA *follows them to the door and listens. Presently* HARRY LUCENTI, *pale and haggard, still in evening dress, and showing the effects of intoxication the night before, appears at one of the doors.*

IMPERIA. Who is there? Ah! What do you want? Don't leave him.

HARRY LUCENTI. It won't hurt him to stay alone. He won't move. I heard voices. Do they suspect?

IMPERIA. No, they are looking. They will find out soon enough. Perhaps they know already. Go back! Don't let them see you. Don't leave him alone.

HARRY LUCENTI. He's covered up with a piece of brocade—fit winding-sheet for an Emperor. What a death! Insignificant as his life. Ludwig of Bavaria was the last King.

IMPERIA. Oh! Be still! Be still! I can't bear to hear you, to see you! You are as bad as he was. What difference does it make how he died? He deserved such a death. It does not matter who killed him.

HARRY LUCENTI. Don't tell me that Heaven has punished him. Nonsense, Imperia! Accident—chance. Many a rogue

has died an old man in his bed, amid the benedictions of his children.

LEONARDO *enters.*

IMPERIA. Leonardo! How could you be so long?

LEONARDO. I but this moment received your note. Ah! Harry! What are you doing here?

HARRY LUCENTI. I? Imperia will tell you. A sad office, which leaves nothing for me to do—but to think. Silence!

He disappears.

IMPERIA. Leonardo, I don't know what you have thought since we drifted apart, what your impressions of me may have been. I only know that in the decisive moments of my life, when my heart turns instinctively toward that which is true, I have thought of you as a loyal and faithful friend. Am I wrong?

LEONARDO. No, Imperia. We parted without ill feeling. You were in love with life, you wanted to realize my vision—the ideal of my statue; I, to retire from the world, to find solace in meditation and dreams. The wall of facts came between us. Why do you send for me now?

IMPERIA. To destroy the facts which threaten to close in upon our lives. Your ideal, your vision, the throne of your Imperia—ah, how near it is! It is not inherited, no, the poor inherit no thrones, but we have the power to overthrow them and to reign by right of intelligence without being kings. Do you remember? I told you I was going to Suavia to be Empress? Well, I am not Empress, but I reign in an Emperor's heart—he is mine, I know it; I hold him in the hollow of my hand. He cannot live without me. What do you say now? I am your Imperia, your statue; your spirit breathes in me. I am the realization of your dream.

LEONARDO. Yes, my Imperia—my love! My first, my

only love! Live for me, triumph for me! Alas, I could do no more than dream!

IMPERIA. Yes, I shall triumph; but first it is necessary to destroy the facts, to trample reality under foot. The baby Prince of Suavia is dead. The old Emperor abdicates the crown——

LEONARDO. Then Prince Florencio....

IMPERIA. Prince Florencio is dead.

LEONARDO. Dead?

IMPERIA. Yes, he is dead, murdered last night—before my eyes. No, I killed him myself.

LEONARDO. You! What are you talking about, Imperia? Are you mad?

IMPERIA. Yes, I—I did it! Or what is the same thing, it was my Donina, my child! She was defending her youth, her innocence, her love. It was the vengeance of all of us who had fallen by him before. Don't you believe it? Look! this is his dagger, a precious stiletto, a work of art, exquisitely damascened. The handle is gold, set with jewels. He was playing with it, half caressing, half threatening her. "Would you dare to kill me?" he asked her. "A kiss first and it is yours." And he offered her the handle like a jewel. My Donina, when she felt that kiss, plunged the blade into his heart. No, I am not dreaming, these are not phantoms of the witches' lair. Do you remember? When we parted, I told you it was Saturday Night. Well, its horrible phantoms have followed me back into life, they hover about the room. Do you want to see him? He is here. Harry Lucenti is watching the corpse.

LEONARDO. But it cannot be possible! These things cannot have happened. Nightmares, hallucinations!

IMPERIA. At first I thought so myself. When I came home, I forgot everything. A moment ago and I was laugh-

ing and talking with the Countess; it all seemed so unreal and far away—spectres from the other world, phantoms of our witches' souls. But it is the truth, Leonardo; it is the truth!

LEONARDO. But what are you going to do? They will find out....

IMPERIA. I am not afraid. I shall fight; I shall win. Phantoms cannot frighten me. They will be here in a moment; perhaps they already know. You see, I am calm. They will say nothing. You will see....

LEONARDO. No, Imperia, you are trembling. What is that you are staring at?

IMPERIA. No, no! I am calm. Hush! They are here....

LEONARDO. They must know.

IMPERIA. I shall tell them if they do not.

PRINCE MICHAEL *and the* SIGNORE *enter.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia, the Signor Prefect wishes to speak with you. Pardon, Leonardo, I did not know you were here.

LEONARDO. Highness....

PRINCE MICHAEL. [*To the* SIGNORE] Leonardo will retire with me, if you prefer to see her alone.

IMPERIA. No, I prefer that he remain during the examination. I assume the Signor Prefect wishes to examine me?

LEONARDO. As you see.

IMPERIA. Then I prefer to answer in the presence of my friends. Otherwise, the authority of the Signor Prefect might prove intimidating.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Unfortunately, indications that something serious has happened to Prince Florencio multiply every moment. No one has seen him this morning. It has been impossible to ascertain where he is.

SIGNORE. It is known that last night he was at Cecco's

tavern. Here is the list of the persons who were there—the complete list. Will you look it over? Is there any one missing?

IMPERIA. No one.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Your name is on the list.

IMPERIA. That proves that the Signore is well served by his police.

SIGNORE. Then it may be true also that the Prince left the tavern shortly before daybreak, somewhat intoxicated, as it seems, supported by Harry Lucenti and the proprietor of the tavern. He was lifted into your carriage, and driven to your house. Shortly afterward, you returned in the company of a girl named Donina, a circus performer, with whom you must have some connection, as this is not the first time you have been seen with her.

PRINCE MICHAEL. The Signore knows who Donina is; he is informed of your relationship.

SIGNORE. I am informed of everything. Except for the persons who, without doubt, are now in this house, all those who were with the Prince last night are under surveillance as a matter of precaution. The affair is a delicate one. Any indiscretion might compromise persons of quality, who are not to be treated like ordinary offenders. I am questioning you as a friend, Signora. Those who were present assure me that the Prince left the tavern at the same time that you did, as I have already said. Well? Is this an amorous adventure? Or a political intrigue? Is it true that Prince Florencio is now in your house?

IMPERIA. Prince Florencio is in my house. I brought him home with me. But I brought him home dead.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Dead!

SIGNORE. Dead!

IMPERIA. Yes, Prince Florencio has committed suicide.

SIGNORE. What is that, Signora?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Impossible!

LEONARDO. What are you doing?

IMPERIA. [*Firmly*] He has committed suicide. In spite of everything you may know, in spite of everything you may discover, this is and will remain the truth.

SIGNORE. But it is utterly out of the question. There is nothing whatever to indicate it.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Come! We shall see....

IMPERIA. No! Hear me first. He was murdered; that is the truth—I was there; I saw it with my own eyes. But nobody can be held responsible for his death. If you attempt to investigate, to punish it, to lay bare the facts, the facts will become involved in falsehood, and calumny and infamy and lies will entangle us all in the crime, from those miscreants whose very faces betray the degeneracy of this contemptible Prince, to the Emperor of Suavia himself, who might very well have suborned an assassin to relieve himself of the incubus of such an heir to the crown,

PRINCE MICHAEL. Infamous!

SIGNORE. Signora!

IMPERIA. Yes, I was there—your mistress, the mistress of the heir to the throne! But nobody knows why I was there. I can accuse myself, I can accuse you. The Prince had his adherents in Suavia. The halo of martyrdom would set very well upon his brow. If you wish to undeceive the world, to proclaim the truth—very well. Proclaim it. And I will proclaim it, too. Let us tell the life that he led, expose his vices, his crimes, and fix a stain upon his memory, until the contempt and scorn of the world overwhelms you all, and the rest of his kind, partners in his infamies.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. Your Highness....

PRINCE MICHAEL. But what is this?

The DUKE OF SUAVIA *enters.*

DUKE. Highness, the Princess has learned that her son is in this house; she insists upon seeing him. It is impossible to hold her back....

PRINCE MICHAEL. No! Take her away! At once!

DUKE. Yes, don't permit her.... Don't allow her to know....

PRINCE MICHAEL, *the* SIGNORE, *and the* DUKE OF SUAVIA *go out.*

LEONARDO. Do you think they will not tell?

IMPERIA. No, they are afraid. The truth frightens them. I know what his life was, don't you see?—his vices, his crimes, his intrigues. They will not tell—my silence for theirs. The Prince was not murdered; nobody is to blame for his death. It was an accident, a debauch. Don't you see? It is possible to destroy the facts, to triumph over them. Before love, they vanish like a dream.

DONINA. [*From an inner room*] Let me go! Let me go! [*Entering*] Mother! Mother!....

LEONARDO. Is this your child?

IMPERIA. Yes, my child. Why do you run out? You are trembling.

DONINA. Help me! Hide me! I am afraid. I don't want to live, I don't want them to see me, to speak to me. I shan't answer. I shan't say a word!

IMPERIA. Leonardo, take her away—far away.

LEONARDO. We should be seen; it is impossible to escape.

DONINA. Let them kill me! I don't care. I saw him again! Oh, I saw him! And I shall see him always....

IMPERIA. You?

DONINA. Yes, I woke up trembling all over. I wanted to

get away, so I ran out without thinking. And I saw him! Oh, I saw him!—and I shall see him always! I shall go mad!

IMPERIA. What is that? Silence! Do you hear, Leonardo?

LEONARDO. Yes, it is the Princess. She is crying.

IMPERIA. No, no, don't you listen to her! It is nothing.

DONINA. Yes, she is crying! His mother is crying! I can hear her cry. Ah! She is coming nearer, nearer—all the time nearer....

LEONARDO. She is coming this way. Surely they will not permit....

IMPERIA. Wait! No.... They are passing by. Come! Let us go! Let us leave this place!

DONINA. Do you hear her call? "My boy! My boy!"

IMPERIA. Come away!

DONINA. No! I shall hear her always....always! "My boy! My boy!"....

IMPERIA. I can bear it no longer. They were not phantoms, Leonardo; we cannot destroy the facts, they are too strong for us. They creep back into our lives and overwhelm us in the end. This mother weeping for her boy, this child dying of grief and remorse—they chill my blood, they freeze me to the bone! I can do no more. Let what will come, come.

LEONARDO. No, Imperia, your will is strong. Don't throw your life away. Fight on, and triumph!

IMPERIA. No, no, it is too late! Don't think of me! Save Donina, Leonardo! Save Donina!

Curtain

THE FIFTH TABLEAU

Garden of IMPERIA'S *villa.*

DONINA, LEONARDO, *and* NUNU *are together in the garden.* LEONARDO *is modelling a bust of* DONINA, *who poses for him.*

LEONARDO. That will do for to-day, Donina.

DONINA. I am not tired. You mustn't stop on my account.

LEONARDO. I know that you are strong now. We need not be careful of your health any more. It isn't the model this time who is tired, it's the artist. Who could work to-day? What an afternoon! We pray for days like this for our little holidays, but to-day all nature is on holiday. How much better right has she to ask us not to intrude our petty affairs upon her divine calm! Work to-day? Not even in thought! It is enough to be alive, to have eyes to see, to drink in the air and sunlight, to breathe the perfumes of the sea and the flowers. You seem sad, Donina. Why are you always sad?

NUNU. She's afraid she's going to die.

LEONARDO. The doctors say that you are well now. As soon as you are happy, you begin to think of dying. You are happy, Donina?

DONINA. Very happy. That is the reason I am afraid.

NUNU. Can you see Prince Michael's yacht from there?

LEONARDO. Yes, I think so. There it is. It came in this morning.

DONINA. Why does Prince Michael come back? I thought he went away to be Emperor.

LEONARDO. Don't ask me, Donina. It is nothing to us. The Empire of Suavia is very far away.

DONINA. It is a great deal too near.

NUNU. Can't we go out in the boat as we did yesterday? Why do we have to stay here all afternoon?

DONINA. Are you tired, Nunu?

NUNU. No, but the sea air would be better for you. We never leave this place.

DONINA. It is so beautiful!

NUNU. Yes, but it's a bore. It's like a prison.

DONINA. Like a prison?

LEONARDO. [*Aside to* NUNU] You're a bad actor, Nunu.

NUNU. I can't stand this forever.

IMPERIA *enters.*

IMPERIA. You have stopped early to-day. Doesn't Donina feel well?

DONINA. No, it was Leonardo.

LEONARDO. Yes, it was I—the idler always! We are almost done.

DONINA. It looks just like me.

IMPERIA. No, I don't want to see it until it is finished. Does she look as I did when you first knew me, when I was your model?

LEONARDO. No, Imperia. There may be something in the features, but the expression is not the same. You had more life, more will. Donina could never have climbed up over the rocks until she had reached the steps of a throne.

IMPERIA. Why not? You say that because you are merely copying the sadness of her face, you are making a portrait, not expressing an idea in your work. My statue was designed to challenge attention, to triumph eternally, while hers is only for me. You are snatching from death by your art all that we are permitted to save.

LEONARDO. I told her I was tired, but her color frightened me—her labored breath. There is no hope.

IMPERIA. They say that those who die of this disease are never conscious of the approach of death. But Donina thinks of nothing else. She looks forward to it, she expects it.

LEONARDO. It is the cunning of despair, the fearsome dread of death. She knows that it is a bad sign to be cheerful, so she pretends to be afraid. But she does not deceive herself.

DONINA *laughs.*

IMPERIA. She is laughing! She is happy! Oh, so happy! What are you doing, Donina?

DONINA. Picking flowers for you—roses. Aren't roses your favorite flowers? I was laughing because Nunu was telling me a story about them. It wasn't very nice, but it was funny; all his stories are. It was about a nunnery with a garden that had roses in it, and the devil came and hung a little imp on every bush, just the same in color as the roses, so that they looked like little babies. And when the nuns saw them, they thought they were in mortal sin, and so as not to make a scandal they ran and hid them in their cells. But the little devils jumped out and began to run and skip and cut up all sorts of capers—they sang in the choir, and danced while the organ played, and rang the bells in the belfry and then finally—no, I don't think I'll tell you what they did finally—it might not seem nice; but it was funny. You tell them, Nunu; they'll laugh as much as I did.

NUNU. Don't be silly. Come on and pick some more flowers.

IMPERIA. Yes, laugh, Donina, laugh! Ah, Leonardo, why do we waste our lives in dreams and ambition? Our true life is the love which springs in our hearts. The happiness of a child is the only lasting joy, the one hint which life gives us of the value and meaning of life.

LEONARDO. Then you are not going to Suavia? Prince Michael has returned solely for you. Must he go back alone to rule his empire?

IMPERIA. He says that without me he cannot accept the crown. His ship will be lost forever on the deep, cast up on some unknown coast, where his days will be spent in obscurity, and he will slip from the world unnoticed at the close. By nature he is indolent; all his energy, his hope are in me.

LEONARDO. But you?

IMPERIA. While my child lives, my place is with her.

LEONARDO. It will not be long.

IMPERIA. I never wished till now to stop the hand of time. On a day like this, it seems as if we should never die; as if it were impossible that we should be passing through life like shadows, looking out for a little while upon the earth, the sea, and the sky which whisper to us of their eternity and our sudden death. Life cannot be all a cheat—it would be too cruel! No, there is, there must be something higher, something more eternal in us than this sea and this sky.

LEONARDO. But what is there in our lives which deserves to endure? Is it what we are, or what we appear to be?—the love that was in us once? what we long for and dream? Where are our true selves to be found?

DONINA *and* NUNU *come forward with armfuls of roses.*

DONINA. Look what lovely roses! They are all colors. Bring them here, Nunu; we picked them all. What difference does it make? The bushes will be covered with them again to-morrow.

IMPERIA. There never were such beautiful flowers.

LEONARDO. Nor none more suggestive of life. All the colors of the flesh—red, like blood, like lovers' lips; pink, like the skins of children; amber pale, with a languorous carmine

touch, like the warm nudes of Titian; voluptuously opulent, like the great goddesses of Rubens; white and bloodless as a virgin's hands.

DONINA. These are sallow like wax—like the dead.

LEONARDO. No, Donina, they are all alive, they are not like the dead; they live. When I hold them upside down, they are like little ladies, with the petals and the corolla here for skirts. This might be a stately marchioness, a Madame Pompadour, with her wide rose panniers—the stem her slender waist, and these two green leaves by the side, her great, puffed-out sleeves. Although something is lacking.... wait! Let us make a foolish little head for our marchioness out of this petal, with a long, tapering neck so thin, as the poet says, that it is shaped for the guillotine. This might be an Infanta of Spain with her spreading hoop-skirts, and this a magnificent Dogaressa of Venice, imperial in her purple! When you hold them like this, isn't it true that roses resemble ladies in flowers?

DONINA. Yes, they do. How lovely! They are just like ladies. Look, Nunu! But you won't look. You're foolish enough to be afraid that they might be really, and fall in love with you. But I'll spoil them all first. There! There!

[*Throwing roses at him.*

NUNU. Look out! [*Throwing roses back at her*] It's a battle of flowers.

DONINA. Look out yourself!

They run off, pelting each other with roses.

IMPERIA. It cannot be death, Leonardo. Donina is so happy!

LEONARDO. Deceptive happiness! You know the cost.

IMPERIA. Yes, but Donina could not live without him. In spite of all that he has done to her, I had to bring him here, to keep him, by flattery, by fear. The wretched boy wants

to go, but I tell him that I will have him taken to Suavia and accused of the murder of Prince Florencio. What does it matter if it is a lie? Donina has forgiven him, and she believes that he loves her as she was never loved before, and she is happy—dying happy in the belief. Without it, she would have died long ago, in an agony of grief and remorse. His treachery would have killed her.

LEONARDO. Do you believe that Nunu will be able to deceive her much longer?

IMPERIA. It is not his virtue that I count upon, it is his interest. And I am here to attend to it.

LEONARDO. The Countess Rinaldi has driven up to the gate.

IMPERIA. She has seen the Prince's yacht, and she is anxious to know whether I am going to Suavia. Tell her I am not at home; get rid of her in any way you can. That woman is odious.

LEONARDO. Why odious? She is another shadow passing through life, indefatigable in the pursuit of her ideal.

IMPERIA *goes out.*

The COUNTESS RINALDI *enters.*

RINALDI. Leonardo!

LEONARDO. My dear Countess! Did they tell you Imperia was not at home?

RINALDI. I didn't ask whether she was or not. There was nobody at the gate. However, I was certain to find some one, now that Imperia is living *en famille.* Of course I count you as one of the family.

LEONARDO. Of the artistic family.

RINALDI. It is the same thing. We all return to our starting-point sooner or later, unless we run on forever. But I advise you to be careful; Prince Michael has returned, too, in spite of everything.

LEONARDO. In spite of it? He always insisted that he would.

RINALDI. It seems that after the suicide of Prince Florencio —I hope you notice the suicide—I confine myself to the truth which is official.

LEONARDO. An unexceptionable sort of confinement. After all it makes life possible.

RINALDI. I know. The difficulty is, though, that people have such a weakness for the likely lie. Nobody has been able to account for the suicide.

LEONARDO. Why not ask the Signore?

RINALDI. You could never get it out of him. A crime here would horrify the aristocratic element; they are the persons who spend the money. One cannot die here, one cannot kill oneself, except in some way that is agreeable. We die of happiness, we kill ourselves so as not to occasion inconvenience to others. Nevertheless, I have decided to swallow the whole story—a reminiscence, eh, of Saturday Night? Like that affair of Lady Seymour's. Of course you have heard?

LEONARDO. Not another suicide?

RINALDI. Not this time. I met her with her arm in a sling—it seems she fell in her automobile. Last year she had a cut over her eye—a fall, so I hear, with her horse. These accidents always happen when her husband is away from home. Two or three months suffice for the wounds to heal....

LEONARDO. Physically and morally, I suppose?

RINALDI. I confine myself to the truth which is official.

LEONARDO. You are a very prudent woman. By the way, your color is particularly fine this morning. You are looking excessively well. I notice a certain austerity in your *toilette*....

RINALDI. The change in my life. For a time, I was threatened with nervous prostration, but my physician prescribed a severe regimen. "Control yourself," he said. "Remember, neurasthenia is no longer in fashion. The reign of nerves is at an end; this season we shall have a renascence of muscle."

LEONARDO. You are planning to be the Michael Angelo of this renascence?

RINALDI. Fortunately, I had no difficulty in accommodating myself to the change. Heaven directed my feet to the path of salvation.

LEONARDO. Without elephants?

RINALDI. Don't recall those absurdities! I have put such trifles behind me. During one of my walks in the country, I stopped at the door of a Franciscan monastery. It occurred to me to go in. A pale-faced friar with a long, bushy beard was preaching. What a sermon that was! How he did preach about love, human and divine!

LEONARDO. You could have preached upon the former with greater show of authority.

RINALDI. You are laughing at me. I was converted upon the spot. Now, I hear him preach every afternoon. He is a second St. Francis. I am organizing a series of festivals for the restoration of the convent.

LEONARDO. Poor saint! The temptations of St. Anthony will be nothing to his.

RINALDI. You must not say that; you don't know him.

LEONARDO. I know you.

RINALDI. I accept the aspersions of the world as just penance for my sins; I could even wish to have people think worse of me. In pursuance of my plan, I am soliciting from door to door. Of course I may count upon you and Imperia? Will you send me one of your works for my kermess?

LEONARDO. With the greatest of pleasure. Something appropriate—a Magdalen, perhaps. Would you prefer her before or after conversion?

RINALDI. Only be sure that she has plenty of clothes.

LEONARDO. Better have it before, then. Afterward, you recall in what state she ran through the wilderness—as you will be doing shortly, no doubt, though not through the wilderness.

DONINA *and* NUNU *re-enter.*

DONINA. [*Running after* NUNU] Don't you run away. Give me that letter! Give it to me, or....

NUNU. [*Discovering the* COUNTESS] Hush! Be still! Don't you see?.... You're always picking at me.

DONINA. You always——

NUNU. Let me alone, I tell you.

RINALDI. [*To* LEONARDO] Oh, don't bother to explain! Two protégés of Imperia's.... Daphnis and Chloe? Or Paul and Virginia? This is the Garden of Love.

LEONARDO. Of profane love; it is not for you.

RINALDI. Will you tell Imperia of the object of my visit?

LEONARDO. I shall announce your conversion.

RINALDI. But merely as a preliminary; I am counting upon her.

LEONARDO. She will certainly hear of it.

RINALDI. These lovers are fascinating! Both children, of course.... How old is the boy?

LEONARDO. Countess, a ripe age.

The COUNTESS *and* LEONARDO *go out.*

DONINA. Give me that letter! Give it to me!

NUNU. That's right. Scream, kick, cry, so that everybody can hear—you always do. Then when you get worse, they'll say it's my fault. Didn't I tell you it was for Tommy? Can't you read? What do you want me to say?

DONINA. For Tommy, is it? Yes, the envelope's addressed to him, but maybe there's another letter inside. Maybe you've arranged—if you hadn't, you wouldn't have hidden while you were writing it. You would have told me. What do you care if I know what you write to Tommy?

NUNU. I wish you did.

DONINA. I will, then. Give it to me!

NUNU. Let go! Let go!

DONINA. Oh! I can't.... I am choking. Oh!....

NUNU. Now you see.

DONINA. My God!

LEONARDO *re-enters.*

LEONARDO. What is the matter with Donina?

DONINA. Nothing.... Nothing....

NUNU. She's crazy. She wants to read a letter I've written to a friend. I can't stand it any longer. Because you pay me you think it's easy—I have an easy life. But I don't. If it wasn't——

DONINA. They pay you? If it wasn't? What do you mean?

LEONARDO. Nunu! Why do you tease Donina?

DONINA. That's the only way he can enjoy himself—and I have given my life for him, yes, my soul! Because I am dying for him.... It was for him that I killed him, it was for him that I lost my soul!

LEONARDO. Donina! What have you done, you fool? [*Aside to* NUNU] Couldn't you wait?

NUNU. Wait? I've waited long enough. I can't stand it any more. So you'd like to read that letter? You want to know what I've written to my friend? Well, then, read it! Read it!

DONINA. [*Snatching the letter*] Ah!

NUNU. Read it! It isn't my fault.

LEONARDO. What does it say?

DONINA. [*Falling flat upon the ground*] Mother of God!

LEONARDO. What have you done? Donina! Donina!

NUNU. It wasn't my fault.

IMPERIA *enters.*

LEONARDO. Imperia, Donina is dying.

IMPERIA. Donina! My Donina!

DONINA. Leave me! Let me die. You have deceived me. Everybody has deceived me.

IMPERIA. What is the matter? This letter?.... What is in this letter?

DONINA. Leave me! Leave me!

IMPERIA. Ah! You have killed her.

NUNU. It wasn't my fault; she wanted to read it. I've stood it long enough. Let me go!

IMPERIA. Go? You forget that I have you in my parole, you coward! I thought that if I paid your price, I could make of you what I pleased, whether it was good or evil, but it was not the life you led that made you evil, it was your wicked heart, you low-born brother of Prince Florencio, incapable of pity or of love!

DONINA. No, let him go. Why did you make him deceive me? Why did you deceive me, Nunu? You can go now; I forgive you. Don't wait here for me to die. They'll give you what they promised you. Give him his pay—he has pretended long enough. I know the truth now. I am dying.... It is the only truth that he ever told me.

IMPERIA. You wrote that letter on purpose for her to see it. You knew that it would kill her.

NUNU. No. She did it herself.

IMPERIA. Leave this house at once! Don't you wait until Donina is no longer here to beg me to let you go! Go, go!

NUNU. Like this?

LEONARDO. Don't you worry. You'll get your pay.

LEONARDO *and* NUNU *go out.*

DONINA. Why did you deceive me? When all my life is a lie, how can I live?

IMPERIA. Donina!

DONINA. I am a hindrance to you; I know it. They want you there in that empire, that cursed empire with its Prince, its ice, and its snow. The white ship is there with its white sails, its men that are so pale.... It has come to take you away to that empire, of which you have been dreaming so long.

IMPERIA. No, Donina, no! I shall be here always with you. The white ship will sail away like a white bird, but I shall still be here with you, always with you! Love is the only reality of our lives—I shall be here with you, always, always with you!

DONINA. Yes, waiting for me to die—as he was.

IMPERIA. No, Donina, your life is my life!

DONINA. Before the white ship sails away like a white bird, I, too, shall sail away forever. I shall not know it, but I shall be gone, like a shadow, like a cloud from the sea. I shall have passed out of your life.

IMPERIA. No, my Donina! Child of my heart, of my one, my only love! Like shadows all, all shall pass but love—that ripens and lives on.

LEONARDO *and* PRINCE MICHAEL *enter.*

LEONARDO. Imperia....the Prince....

IMPERIA. Ah! Why do you come?

PRINCE MICHAEL. You have sent no answer. I have waited all day.

DONINA. He has come for you.

IMPERIA. I shall not go.

DONINA. I know the truth. I tell you, you will kill me, with your lies—waiting here, always pretending, for me to die.

IMPERIA. What do you mean?

DONINA. Promise me that you will not wait; you will go to-day. Or I shall kill myself. I will not ruin your life! Promise....

IMPERIA. Yes, I will go to-day. Leave me a little while. Leonardo, help Donina.

LEONARDO. Donina!

DONINA. No, it was nothing. I am better now.... But I know that it is death.

LEONARDO *and* DONINA *go out.*

PRINCE MICHAEL. Will you come?

IMPERIA. Yes.

PRINCE MICHAEL. I should not have returned without you.

IMPERIA. Would you have renounced the throne?

PRINCE MICHAEL. Why not? When it is difficult to live one's own life in peace, what must it be to rule an empire? Millions of human beings struggling to be happy, and depending for their happiness upon our precious laws!

IMPERIA. You have no right to talk like that. Would you renounce your divine heritage? The millions of your empire will never attain happiness through you. We are unable to assure the happiness even of those who are nearest to our hearts. Suffering and death are eternal; it is the will to overcome them that makes us immortal, yes, equal to God! You know nothing of life. Good and evil have no significance for you. They have for me. I have struggled, as many have struggled before, against poverty, against envy and shame, injustice and outrage, I have suffered and borne all, and I say to you now upon the steps of your throne:

Do justly, love mercy, and your empire will be glorious among men.

LEONARDO *enters.*

LEONARDO. Donina is asleep. Thanks to an anodyne, she has fallen asleep. If you must go, it is better now. The parting would be too sad. I shall remain with her.

IMPERIA. Go? Leave her? No, no! I cannot.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Bring her with you.

IMPERIA. It would kill her. No! No....

LEONARDO. Death cannot delay in any case.

IMPERIA. But she is still alive! My place is with her. Can't you wait? Oh, this is horrible! Wait!

LEONARDO. Leave her, your Highness. She will come, I promise you.

PRINCE MICHAEL. Imperia, if you do not come before night, my yacht will sail, but without me. Instead, it will bear my abdication. In the morning I shall be here with you to resume our old life, and the Empire of Suavia will be lost to you—like a dream.

The PRINCE *goes out.*

IMPERIA. Leonardo, what shall I do? I am your idea, your Imperia. Breathe your spirit into me! What ought I to do?

LEONARDO. You have fashioned your life by your will, and you know where it lies.

IMPERIA. My life is your ideal—my vision! I will go. But Donina— Do you say that she is asleep? I must see her.

LEONARDO. Your courage will fail.

IMPERIA. I must see her! I must see her!

LEONARDO. You will not go if you do. Imperia! You will not go! You will not go!

IMPERIA *enters the house.* LEONARDO *remains at the door and listens. Presently,* IMPERIA *reappears.*

LEONARDO. Imperia!....

IMPERIA. She is asleep. I kissed her upon the forehead, and she did not wake.

LEONARDO. You kissed her upon the forehead?

IMPERIA. Leonardo, it is my duty to go, is it not?

LEONARDO. Yes.... Triumph, Imperia! It is the triumph of my ideal! But first, tell me—I must know it—when you kissed her forehead....

IMPERIA. Well?

LEONARDO. Was it cold?

IMPERIA. Yes—if you must know. She was dead. And now death cannot hold me back. Do you wonder?

LEONARDO. Your soul is great. I wonder and admire.

IMPERIA. To achieve anything in life we must subdue reality, and thrust aside its phantoms which confuse and hem us round, to follow the only reality, the flight of our witches' spirits as on Saturday Night they turn to their ideal—some toward evil, to be lost in its shadows forever like spectres of the night, others toward good, to dwell eternally in it, the children of love and of light. Good-by, Leonardo.

LEONARDO. Good-by, Imperia.

IMPERIA. This is the kiss of the spirit which you gave me, grand as your ideal!

Curtain

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